



Vinciigliata  
and Maiano

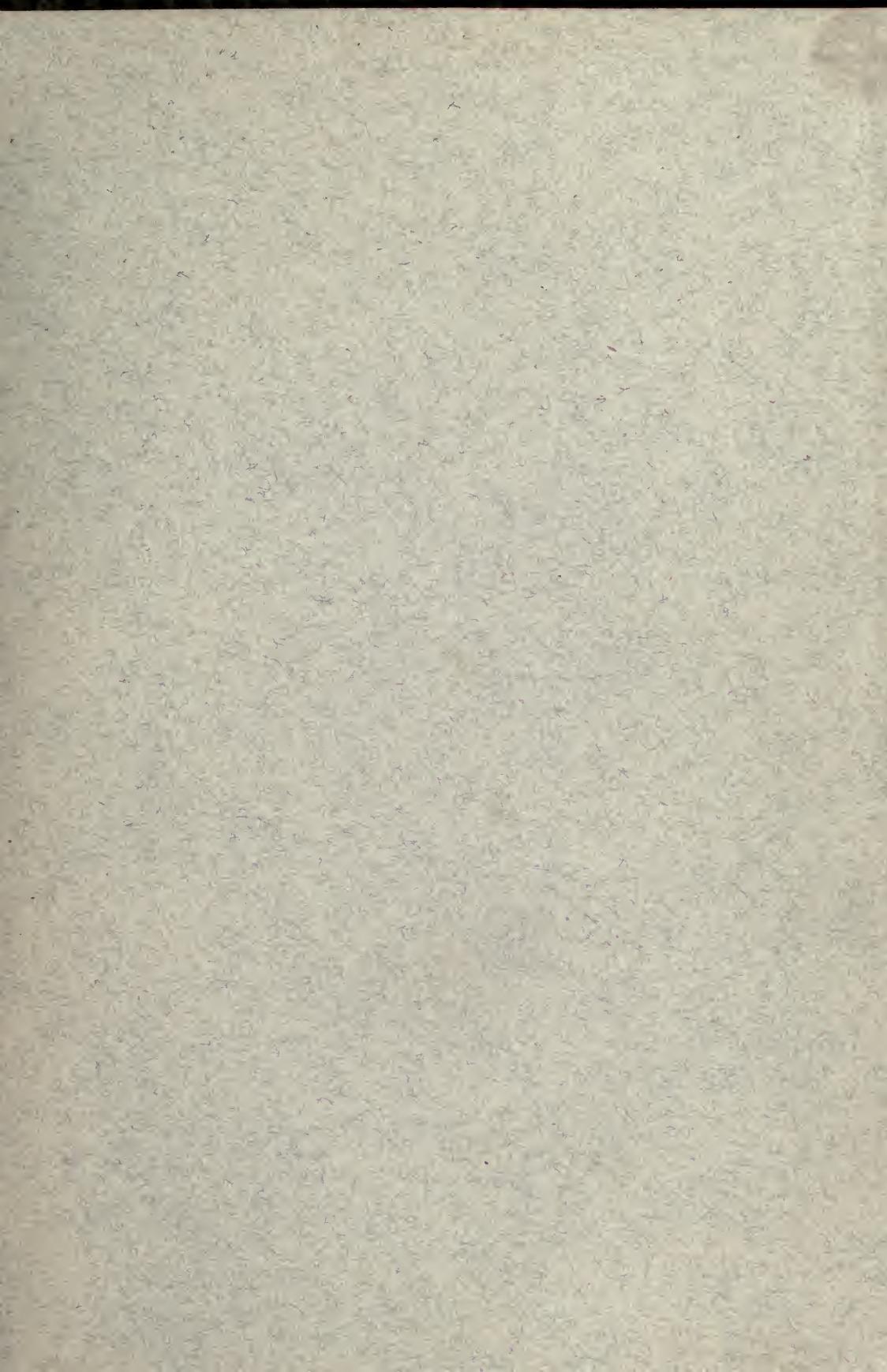
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VINCIGLIATA

AND

MAIANO.



# VINCIGLIATA AND MAIANO

BY

LEADER SCOTT

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*TUSCAN SKETCHES, &c.*

*Florence,*

PRINTED BY G. BARBERA.

1891.

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TO JOHN TEMPLE-LEADER

KNIGHT COMMANDER OF THE ORDER  
OF THE CROWN OF ITALY,

*whose estate on Florentine hills, here described,  
enshrines so much of ancient history, and natural  
beauty, this book is dedicated.*



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## PREFACE.

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Among the many interesting excursions from Florence, none is more enjoyable than a drive to Vincigliata Castle, and certainly none can be more interesting in an historical aspect. Just as the Certosa is a standing illustration of ancient monasticism, which was such a distinct feature of Italian life in past centuries; and the Bargello and Palazzo Vecchio shew the civic rule of the Republic; so Vincigliata illustrates the equally important phase of the feudal era in Italy. Thanks to Mr. Temple-Leader, it is no more a dumb and shapeless ruin, but a full and

complete restoration, giving a clear picture of the middle ages.

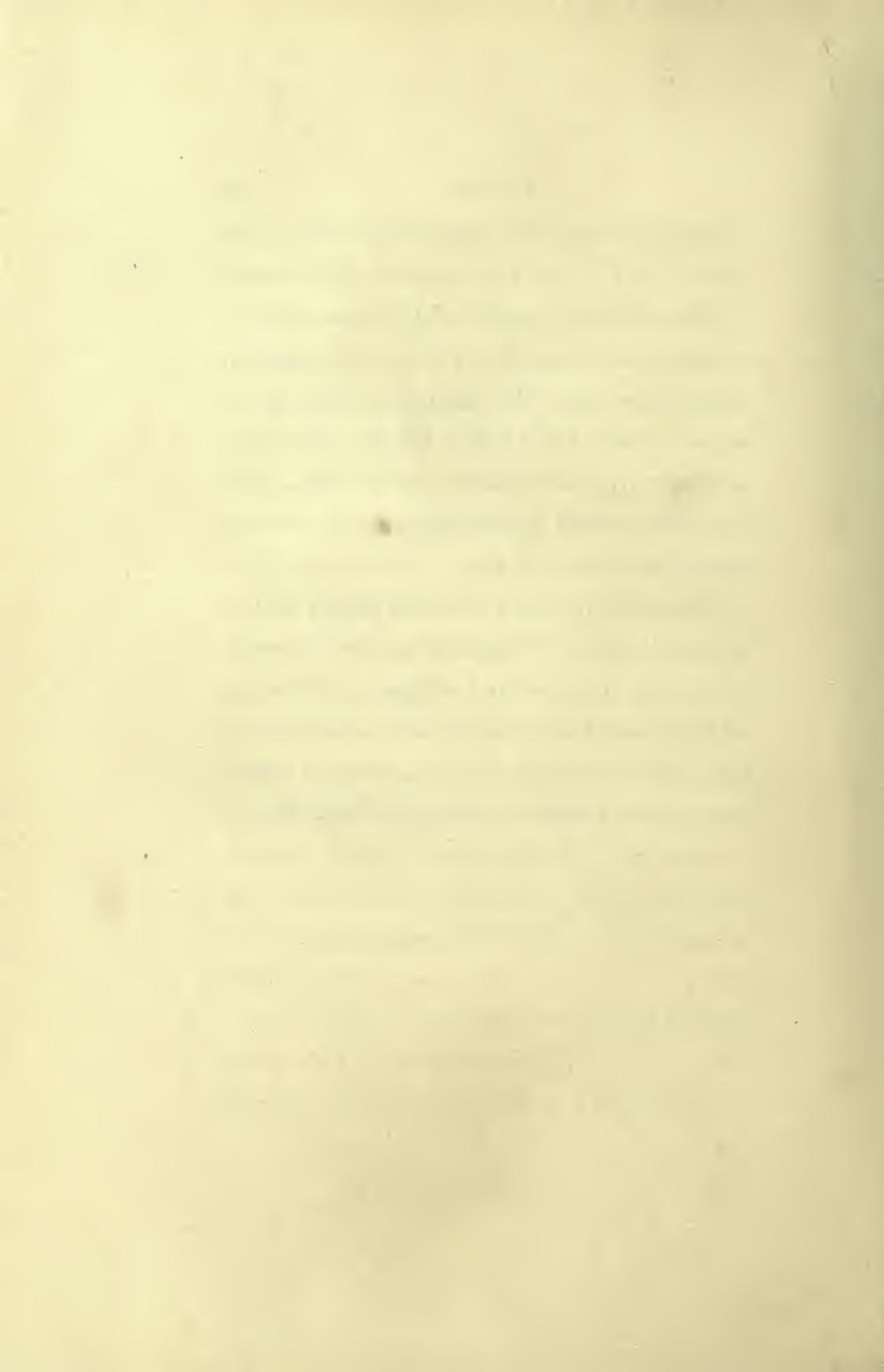
The want of an historical guide to Vincigliata has often been deplored by English-speaking visitors, and I have herewith endeavoured to supply this key to the meaning of the Castle. In Italian, the ground has been well occupied before me, and I can only acknowledge myself greatly indebted to the researches and interesting works of Signor Giuseppe Marcotti, Signor Giovanni Baroni, and Signor Guido Carocci, as well as to the late lamented Baron Alfred de Reumont's charming articles on « Maiano, Vincigliata and Settignano » in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Aug. 1875), and an able account of Vincigliata by the late deeply lamented Lord Lamington, published in *Blackwood's Magazine* for Nov. 1887.

I owe many thanks to Mr. Leader himself for much information kindly given. In seeking the story of Vincigliata Castle and its

possessors, I have been led into following out that of the villas and town houses which took its place, as the homes of those possessors, in later eras. In doing this I have had no occasion to leave the ground belonging to the restorer of the Castle, for his villas are quite as typical of Italian country life, and his town houses of urban customs as his fortress is of feudal times.

Of course it is not to be expected that a book so localized will possess much attraction for general readers, but students of Italian subjects, and those travellers to whom their day at Vincigliata has been a pleasant reminiscence may find it not void of interest.

LEADER SCOTT.



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THE  
CASTLE OF VINCIGLIATA.



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## HISTORICAL.

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### MEDIEVAL VINCIGLIATA.

After the classic memorials of Rome and Magna Grecia, no era has left a clearer mark on Italy than the feudal times. In all the land there is scarcely an eminence without the remains of some ruined castle or stronghold; even up on the heights of the Apennines, many a crag is rendered more rugged in outline by reason of an old tower or fragment of massive wall, where once a feudal chief held sway.

And these remains are not only lingering on in solid architectural form, but, amidst the people in country regions, many old hostilities still smoulder, and the denizen of one village cherishes a keen traditional antagonism to his neighbour of the next hill.

All these things recall an era when the power of the strong was supreme over the weak, and when each chief had to hold his own against other powers by

warfare. In the country the artisan had no safe life except within the walls of his Lord's castle, and in the towns the same warfare existed on a larger scale. There the most powerful men gathered partisans, instead of serfs; and faction warred against faction, so that the city architecture of that time, instead of being domestic, was distinctly feudal. A medieval Italian city bristled with towers and battlements, and every house was a fortress.

This age, so well marked in Italian cities by the older buildings, has in the country little to show but a few old chronicles, a multitude of broken stones, and some village jealousies. It is therefore a work of equal utility to the historian, the archæologist and the student, to shew the characteristic medieval Castle restored in its entire form, and this useful boon has been given to his century by J. Temple-Leader who has so well illustrated medieval times, in his restoration of Vincigliata.

Vincigliata is a fine Castle standing on a hill to the North of Florence, and is interesting both for its architecture and its history, which begins some two centuries before Arnolfo commenced his Duomo and the Palazzo della Signoria, at Florence.

At that time the Burghers had not begun, as in the security of their prosperous days, to people the surrounding hills with villas, where peaceful husband-

men tilled their vineyards. But between the mother city — the Etruscan and Roman Fiesole — on the hill, and the daughter, Florence, growing to beauty in the field of Flowers in the plain, there were the strongholds of a few nobles, guarding the heights around the new city.

One of these fortresses was Vincigliata, which stands high on a rocky eminence to the East of Fiesole, its towers and battlements outlined against a darker hill behind it, whose summit shows another square massive castle, standing boldly out against the blue sky. This is Castel di Poggio, and of course, according to feudal custom, its Lord was ever a mortal enemy of the Lord of Vincigliata.

In ancient times Castel di Poggio belonged to the Del Manzecca family, who possessed the qualities which Dante gives to the Buondelmonte family, whose name "Buon-del-monte" (good men of the mountain) was derived from their brigandish propensities. The sons of the Del Manzecca were such *mauvais sujets* that the roads near the Castel di Poggio were not safe for peaceful travellers. Nor was brigandage their only failing, for history even relates that in 1348 Manzecca di Francese del Manzecca and his friend Lorenzo Anghinetti were summoned to trial before the *Esecutore* for the crime of having eaten meat in Lent in the Castle of the hill! They must have been guilty of

greater crimes than this however, for in 1348, the Commune decreed the utter destruction of Castel di Poggio. The precise reasons for this are not apparent, as in that year while the plague ravaged Florence the deliberations of the Signoria were insufficiently chronicled — it was probably a step necessary to public security, the Castle being little better than a stronghold of robbers. There exists, as proof of its destruction, a note of the payment by the Commune, in July and August 1348, of 86 gold florins to Justo Bartoli, Francisco Berti, and Niccoleno Pagni (the Magistrates who caused Castel di Poggio to be destroyed), for the pay and food of the workmen employed.

How long the more honourable Castle of Vincigliata had stood on its grassy hill, is unknown. Its old name was Careggi, and the first documental evidence referring to it is a deed in the Florentine Badia registering a sale effected in Vincigliata on August 29<sup>th</sup> 1031, by four brothers, Pietro, Giovanni, Rambaldo, and Manfredo, sons of Sichelmo (nicknamed Sizo) to Tegrimo, son of Giovanni subdeacon, of the quota of the rights due to them on the possession of the Church of San Martino near the Badia in Florence. The price given was a gold ring and a horse, coin being evidently scarce in those days.

This deed executed at Vincigliata would imply that the four brothers were in possession of it at the time;

and another deed drawn up on March 28<sup>th</sup> 1069 by Ser Alberto notary, proves that they belonged to the important family Visdomini. By it we learn that Ugo the deacon, guardian of the above named Church of San Martino (being advanced in age and wishing to conform to the will of archdeacon Giovanni, the founder of the Church, himself a Visdomini, that none but members of his own family should have the custody of it), names as custodians the deacon Uberto, the acolyte Giovanni, and Regembaldo, postulate, if he would consent to take vows in the convent of the Badia.

The same deed specifies that Uberto the deacon was the son of a nephew of Guido the first custodian, and that Giovanni the acolyte was the son of another Giovanni Visdomini. Giovanni the deacon, who sold his tithal rights to his kinsman of Vincigliata, was probably a member of the same family.

It is very interesting to find the Visdomini thus holding possesion of other church property as well as the Lay Bishopric — if we might so style it — of the Duomo.

From the 9<sup>th</sup> century when the Cathedral was only the Church of Santa Reparata, the Visdomini took their name from a singular privilege giving them the legal administration of the income of the Bishopric of Florence whenever the See became vacant. This right

gave them immense power in the Church and City, and the Bishop was expected to offer them a large tribute, which usually took the form of edibles, and was carried in great pomp to their towered palaces, in the Corso degli Adimari. Dante speaks of them in *Paradiso*, XVI, 112 :

Così facean li padri di coloro,  
Che, sempre che la vostra Chiesa vaca,  
Si fanno grassi stando a consistoro.

" Such the sires of those, who now,  
As surely as your Church is vacant, flock  
Into her consistory, and at leisure  
There stall them, and grow fat."

(CARY'S trans.)

Here then we find these same lay ecclesiastics with the exclusive custody and claim to the tithes of the Church of San Martino near the Badia, and they were also the founders of another Florentine Church which still bears their name—San Michele Visdomini. They were one of the oldest Florentine families; a certain Buonaccorso Visdomini was knighted by Charlemagne, in A. D. 802; and a Cerrettiero fought under the Emperor Henry I in 1002. They fled from Florence with the other Guelphs after the defeat at Montaperti; but we find a second Cerrettiero, who won an unenviable notoriety as favorite counsellor of the hated Duke of Athens, and with difficulty saved himself from the

fury of the populace when the Duke was driven out in 1343.

A curious old M. S. book in the Magliabechian Library (The *Priorista* di Giuliano Ricci) says: "In early times the Visdomini were said to have been most noble and ancient gentlemen of the Guelph faction, who in 1215 lived in San Martino, and had possessions and towers; they changed their name and arms several times." The Tosinghi, della Tosa, etc. were connected with this family.

Whether the Visdomini held the Castle of Vincigliata for a term of centuries, or a term of years, is not recorded, as there is a hiatus in the documents respecting it till early in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when we find it in the possession of Bocca and Giovanni di Scarlatto: they in 1318 ceded their rights of lordship to Giovanni di Bartolo Usimbardi, who with his brother Barnaba and his son Niccolò were the next inhabitants.

The Usimbardi were well known in Florence till the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when some of them emigrated from the city during the civil wars of that time, and retired to the Val d' Elsa where they became citizens of importance at Colle.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the 16<sup>th</sup> century one of the family named Francesco became father of three eminent sons: Usimbardo bishop of Colle, Pietro bishop of Arezzo, and Lorenzo secretary to the Grand-Duke Ferdinand I.

A certain Bastiano Usimbardi was sent by the Republic to Majorca in 1422 to make a treaty of commerce.

As far as regards their life at Vincigliata, we have only a few old documents and a pretty little legend of a ghost which is said to haunt the precincts of the Castle.

The spectre is that of a maiden, daughter of Giovanni Usimbardi; Juliet-like, she fell in love with their hereditary foe, a son of the Del Manzecca of Castel di Poggio, whom she had seen in the village Church just outside the Castle walls. Unfortunately while yet she lived in Florence the maiden had attracted the admiration of his elder brother, one of the wicked Manzeccas, and so the two brothers became rivals. The villain first tried to murder Giovanni Usimbardi who had indignantly refused him his daughter, and then to kill his innocent brother who was his rival. The lovers met at a certain window in the walls until the girl's father found them and forbade them to meet again, on which the youth vowed he would win the maiden after all. Soon after this the patriotic Messer Giovanni, in spite of his years, took the command of a troop of city militia to go out and fight Castruccio Castracane, who was marching his troops with other Ghibellines against Florence. An unknown knight with no device except a bit of blue ribbon was his

guardian angel, and twice saved his life from the hands of the elder Manzecca — but would never lift his visor until after the victory of the Florentines. The two soldiers then returned together, and Messer Giovanni could no longer deny his daughter to his preserver. But on the eve of the wedding day, Bianca from the Castle walls watched her lover riding down the hill to meet her; and as he arrived at the gates of Vincigliata she saw three men attack and murder him under her very eyes — they were his evil-minded brother and his minions. The girl lost her senses with horror, and dying of grief soon after, her spirit still haunts the precincts. So much for legend or romance, but the story is so probable and like the times that it may well be told here.<sup>1</sup>

In point of fact the relater of the legend has mistaken the maiden's name, for the daughter of Messer Giovanni Usimbardi was called Selvaggia — a name which recalls that other heroine of a medieval love story, Selvaggia the beloved of Dante's friend Cino of Pistoja, who is celebrated in Petrarch's "Triumph of love."

The household at Vincigliata in the short reign of the Usimbardi was a large one and quite patriarchal. There were Messer Giovanni and his wife Tessa, daugh-

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I.

ter of Pole Domenichi, of the parish of San Remigio, and their daughter Selvaggia; also their son Niccolò with his wife, another Madonna Tessa, daughter of Juncta Nardi. Then there was Messer Giovanni's brother Messer Barnaba with his wife Nera, their two little girls Andreiole and Johanna, and a boy Manfredo.

The candles in the wrought-iron candelabra at Vincigliata must have shone on quite a lively party gathered round the solid table in the large dining hall; and the outer walls of the *ballium* must have echoed to youthful voices and playful laughter, as well as to the clang of the soldiers' warlike tread and weapons.

The first to leave the family circle was Messer Giovanni, and ere long his brother Messer Barnaba followed him to the tomb, leaving Niccolò head of the family. The property then had to be divided by Niccolò and his cousin Gregorio (son of a third brother who lived in Florence), with due shares to all the other aunts and cousins.

It may be interesting to know the style of property which constituted wealth in those days, and as the cousins' legacy was a goodly heritage for the times, we will make a condensed list from the portentous document in queer old Latin which Ser Alberto the notary drew up.

The estate consisted of

A house with court and well in Via San Romeo in the parish of San Remigio, Florence.

A house walled around in same parish, in Via di Bingoccio.

A large house in same street with courtyard and well; of which Niccolò was to inherit five parts out of eighteen by right of his father Giovanni.

A house in Florence in the Via dei Greci, parish of San Firenze.

The Castle of Vincigliata known as "La Torre" with its towers, court, garden, arable land, well, and woodlands; the half of which pertained to Niccolò in right of his father's claim.

The Podere of the Torre,—of which also Niccolò had claim to half,—with its courts, trees, house, huts and vineyards.

A piece of ground called "Campo al Borro."

Ditto called "Le Lame" both adjoining the Church of Santa Maria.

Another piece called "La Lungaia."

Six other pieces.

The "Podere della Quercia" which with its houses, oil-press etc. also belonged to Niccolò as his father's heir.

Several pieces of land respectively named "Gli Areni," "Lo Staioro," "La Vignuola," "Pian di Novoli" etc.

Two portions of land with stone quarries, in the parish of Settignano.

The "Podere del Sancto" with its peasant's house, vineyards, and woodlands, in the parish of Santa Maria di Vincigliata.

A cultivated piece called "La Boccia."

A plantation called "Alla Castellina."

A cultivated and wooded bit.

Three other fields.

A piece of land at Montorzoli called "Al Muro Orlandi" partly wood and partly pasturage.

A field for pasture.

The "Bosco al rio," a bit of woodland.

Cultivated and wooded land at Cafaggio.

A piece of pasture land.

Three fields in one called "Al Monte."

A portion of woodland called "Il Collicciolo."

The "Podere di Mezzano" with house and sheds, trees, and cultivated land.

A wooded and cultivated piece "Agli Areni."

Another above the old vineyard.

Four others not named.

Five others named "Campobasso," "Poggerello," "Bagno," "Ulivello" and "Strada al Monte."

A piece of land with olives and trees.

A Podere called "Mulinaccio;" with tower and dovecot, canal, residence, mill, orchard, vines, olives, trees and woods, quarries and cane plantations, in the parish of San Martino at Maiano.

A piece of olive plantation and canes in same parish called " Campo alla Strada."

An olive plantation adjoining the monastery of Maiano; and lastly a cane plantation at the foot of Monte Ceceri on the river Mensola.

Such an estate as this was of course very difficult to divide without the assistance of the law, for Niccoldò, as heir to his father, had a larger claim than Gregorio on several lots, especially the Castle of Vincigliata and its *poderi*. There were also Madonna Nera widow of Barnaba, with her daughters Andreiuole and Joanna, and her little son Manfredo to be provided for.

Accordingly they had recourse to the good old institution of arbitration, and the two heirs by joint consent elected Baldo son of Giovanni Orlandini as arbiter on their side; while Barnaba's widow Nera, on her part, chose the three honest men Bencivieni Tornaquinci Bonsostegni, Guccio Stefano Soderini, and Sandro Iacopo dell'Asino, as her private advisers; while three notaries filled the office of public arbiters.

All these worthy men having studied the case gave their judgments in the house of the Consuls of the "Artes Medicorum" in the parish of Santa Cecilia on June 7<sup>th</sup> 1335; there being present four notaries, amongst whom a prodigious document in extraordinary latin was drawn up, in the name of the arbiters. It begins with an inventory of the estate and goes on: —

"Having seen and considered everything, respecting the parties wishing to divide the property between them; having consulted and treated with many friends of the parties; and having deliberated between us; we, invoking the name of Christ, do hereby decree, pronounce, sentence, declare, discern, arbitrate, divide, give, concede, assign, adjudge and state, etc., the share of each claimant," which decision shorn of its redundancies runs something as follows:

The land was proportioned in eighteen precise shares, Niccolò as only heir to his father, taking five parts out of the eighteen, Gregorio two parts and Bartolo, Ugolino, and other cousins receiving their due shares; but in regard to Vincigliata and another estate Niccolò was entitled to a full half.

The widow Nera was to receive 200 florins in gold, besides the repayment of her dote of 600 florins. Her children Andreiuole and Giovanna were to receive 1000 gold florins each as wedding portion, besides inheriting the bed of their father Barnaba, which no doubt was a splendid erection of carved wood, with tapestry curtains hanging from its canopy.

Niccolò and Giovanni were also bound to provide house-room and board, for Madonna Nera; for her daughters, till they were married; and for her little son Manfredo for ten years from the day of his father's death, besides paying 160 florins to Berti Azzucci di

Cignano, Manfredo's guardian, for the support of the boy. This is the way in which Florence guarded the interests of her citizens in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It would be well if our widows and orphans were to have official guardians in these days.

It is to be supposed that the residence accorded to the aunt and cousins was not at Vincigliata, for only a month later in that year the same notary, Ser Salvi Dini, drew up a deed for the sale of the Castle for the price of 4060 gold florins to Paolo the judge, son of Decco di Ceffino of Figline. Probably the sale was effected to realise enough to pay the legacies to Madonna Nera and her daughters; thus the whole family must have taken up their abode in one of the Florentine houses, either in Via de' Greci, or Via di Bingoccio.

Neither did Paolo the judge hold it long; a feudal Castle must have been something of a white elephant and an expensive luxury to a sober citizen, who had to administer the laws in the city. He soon sold it to the Buonaccorsi family, who though also burghers were rich enough to afford a castle in the country, for they were members of a rich banking firm and several of them had been priors of the Signoria.

Unfortunately a check to their prosperity befell the Buonaccorsi just about this time. They had large shares in the great loan made by the Bardi and Pe-

ruzzi to that debtor of bad faith King Edward III of England, to help him through the campaigns of Cressy and Poitiers ; and they suffered in the general crash of Florentine banks in 1345. Being honourable citizens, they immediately parted with Vincigliata for the benefit of their creditors, and on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1345 it was purchased by Niccolò son of Ugo degli Albizi.

As some consolation for their losses the Bardi received permission from Edward III to quarter the royal arms of England with their own as may be seen in an old painted shield at Vincigliata.

Thus in the short space of ten years the Castle had fallen into the hands of four different owners. The Albizi were wealthy and powerful, and belonged to the part of the *grandi* or nobles, but they were not able to withstand the insidious attacks of a more powerful enemy which attacked rich and poor alike. On June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1348 when the plague was raging in the land, Niccolò, being ill of it, called in the notary Ser Andrea di Lancia, and made a pious will, disposing that the *podere* in San Gervasio, called "Il Monte," should form the endowment of a monastery or hospital, which should be constructed, and where divine service should be continually said. His sons and heirs, however, overruled this, and showing that the Church of Vincigliata was in evil condition begged that the *podere* might be assigned to them for its restoration, which was

granted by a decree of the Vicar general of the Bishop of Florence in 1348.

After the plague came wars and invasions. The terrible John Hawkwood was in the Pisan service and by way of keeping his White Company employed, he marched to Florence. The walls of the city were strong and well-defended, so he could not enter there, but he revenged himself by storming all the country castles he could find, and spoiling the villages and undefended towns.

While ravaging the Fiesole hills we may be sure Vincigliata would attract him, especially as at that time it was not so strongly walled as the Albizi and Alessandri afterwards made it. It is supposed that Hawkwood's Company not only sacked but partially destroyed it, for about the year 1367 or 68 we find the Alessandri (lately Albizi) rebuilding it. Those were times when a strong fort was a necessity even to a mercantile Florentine citizen, who was liable at any time to be driven out of his town house and obliged to flee to his stronghold.

The Bianchi and Neri had by this time changed into Guelphs and Ghibellines; and sometimes families were split and brothers became bitter enemies, by taking up opposite sides. This now happened in the Albizi family—who in 1360 were declared Ghibellines.—Two of their number Alessandro and Bartolommeo sons

of Niccolao degli Albizi, however, took the contrary part, and appeared before the legal court asserting that, "having, with their consorts, become the opponents of Francesco di Uberto their kinsman and head of the family, they wished to become *popoli* (of the people, not *grandi* or nobles), to enter the "Arte della Lana" and to change their name and their arms."

The request was granted ; the golden circlets of the Albizi shield were figuratively trodden under foot, and in their stead they took a lamb—argent in field azure—this was given to them by the "Arte della Lana" or Wool Company ; but to distinguish it from the ensign of the guild, the Alessandri lamb has two heads.

This was the branch of the Albizi to whom Vincigliata belonged, and who had now need of its strength as a refuge in the stormy times that were coming.

The Alessandri palace in the Via degli Albizi was the rendez-vous of the heads of the Guelph party ; and on festive occasions, such as the *Palio* or the race of riderless horses on St. John's day, it was the custom of the Gonfaloniere and the Signoria to watch the races from its window. They went in state, robed in ermine and crimson, with their green jerkined trumpeters heralding them.

They were there on St. John's day 1378, when the Ghibellines (no doubt their cousins the Albizi were among the leaders) made a plan to take possession of

the palace of the Signoria in their absence. After this followed the riots of the Ciompi, when the populace wanted to rule the city, and one of Alessandro Alessandri's own wool combers, named Michele di Lando, rose up like a second Rienzi, and, leading the mob, marched barefoot into the palace carrying a banner. He was then and there elected as Gonfaloniere by the populace, but fortunately he was a wise man and used his power in restoring order and liberty; which done, he retired, leaving the Government in the rightful hands again. On these and other occasions Vincigliata must have proved to the Alessandri a house of refuge to them from danger and fighting, and a shelter when exiled from the city with others of their party.

They had already begun the restoration of the Castle, and Ugo, son of Bartolommeo degli Alessandri, considerably augmented the estate by purchasing neighbouring lands, among which was the hill and Castle di Poggio, — now no longer an inimical stronghold, but a mere ruin; for it had been destroyed by order of the Signoria in 1343 — to put an end to the evil practises of the Manzecca brigands, some of whom were taken and put to death.

The will of Ugo placing the estate under care of a trustee is still existing, and is dated May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1399.

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## THE DECLINE.

And now followed long centuries of more peaceful lordship. The "Torre" which when Niccolò Albizi bought it in 1345 was described as "a tower with a low dwelling house (*domus bassis*), offices, loggia, garden and pergola," is cited in the deed of another Niccolò (Alessandri) in 1429 as "A Lordly palace with battlements and subterranean vaults, with an outer wall, enclosing fowl houses, orchard and vineyard, within the precincts."

They were a grand family those Alessandri, and through the next two centuries, indeed as long as the Republic lasted, we find their names in all the most honourable offices.

Antonio was Master of the Mint (Zecca) in 1400 and 1409; Bartolommeo held the same office in 1434, and Benedetto in 1464. Priors were chosen from the family twenty-three times, and nine times did an Alessandri rule the city as Gonfaloniere.

Being so much engaged in the city, most of their life was passed in that palace in Via degli Albizi where those brocade hangings won by their horses in the races on St. John's day (when the Gonfaloniere and Signoria used to go and witness the *Palio*) still adorn the walls. They used Vincigliata more as a country

house to which they retired with their families in the flowery spring, or went to superintend the vintage of the many acres they had round that hill, in the autumn. Many a knightly figure has ridden up or down the stony little mule path now hidden in the pine-woods, that have grown up in later days.

Here in 1381 Niccolò son of Messer Bartolommeo brought his bride on her palfrey with rich housings and gay cortége. The bride Agnoletta Ricasoli had ridden forth on that morning from the gates of Broglia, another of the few medieval castles in Tuscany, which to this day remain entire and habitable. She was a daughter of Bettino Ricasoli whose direct descendant and namesake till lately passed his summers in the same unchanged feudal halls that Agnoletta left five hundred years ago.

We can well imagine the wedding procession, for we have a painting in the Belle Arti representing the marriage of another bride from the Ricasoli family, and are overpowered in contemplation of the pearl embroidered *zimarre*, and gold brocade robes of the ladies. Niccolò, the bridegroom, surely wore parti-coloured hose and a velvet doublet and mantle worked with gold, and his long curls had a plumed cap set daintily on them.

And then the great kitchen at Vincigliata must have been a busy scene; for wedding feasts in those

times were prolonged for two or three days, and all the friends, tenants and dependents of the family made their offerings of fat calves and lambs, of capons and peacocks, of cheeses and sacks of flour, of "rosolio" and good barrels of wine. The cooks roasted the lambs and peacocks whole, and made wondrous pasties like castles and dragons; and there was music and dancing in the hall, till the neglected armour jingled on the walls.

On many a sunny morning Messer Ugo's young son Alessandro has ridden down to the city to join his illustrious fellow students Cosimo de' Medici, Leonardo Buoninsegni, and his cousin Luca dégli Albizi, in the school of the learned Roberto de' Rossi, where they read their master's translation of Aristotle, and discussed Plato with him at the sociable dinners he provided for them;<sup>1</sup> and here a few years later that same Alessandro rode up the hill in silken doublet, with the golden spurs gleaming at his heels which the Emperor Frederick had bestowed when knighting him.

His brother Bartolommeo may have been with him in still more gorgeous brocades and plumed cap, as he came from the court of René d'Anjou at Naples where he filled the offices of Councilor and Treasurer.

On the ramparts the daughters of this same Alessan-

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<sup>1</sup> VESPASIANO, *Vita di Cosimo de' Medici*.

dro Alessandri have stood in their turn, clad in broidered *zimarre* and flowing scarfs, watching their father ride down the rocky road towards the towers of Florence when starting on his embassy to Rome; for he was one of the four ambassadors sent by Cosimo to offer the congratulations of the Republic to Cosimo's old friend Thomas of Sarzana, when he became Pope Nicholas V. At the same time Alessandro also paid homage to the King Alfonso of Naples who was then at Tivoli.

One of the girls must have been that Ginevra degli Alessandri who married Giovanni the son of her father's old school comrade Cosimo de' Medici, and no doubt she often stood on the battlemented tower, keeping watch over the Valley of the Arno, till she could hear the ring of the horse's hoofs on the paved road, and go to meet her lover.

Giovanni de' Medici soon after took her to the palace of his father as a bride. Ginevra has ever been a name ill-omened in Florentine love stories, and not all the grandeur of the Medici palace could shut out sorrow from the young wife who in one year (1464) lost her young husband, and her baby boy; and then Cosimo himself died at Careggi.<sup>1</sup>

According to the usages of the age, the bride would have returned to her father's house when left a child-

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<sup>1</sup> GINO CAPPONI, *Storia della Repubblica di Firenze*.

less widow, and we can imagine what a heavy heart looked down from Vincigliata on the wide valley where she had lost all her loved ones. Thus through many a century the Alessandri held possession of the Castle, though in their days it no longer had to be defended by balestra and arquebuse.

Its ramparts, no longer manned by *cuirassiers*, became mossgrown, and the Castle sank into a mere family dwelling house for a slowly diminishing family. After the fall of the Republic there were no more famous Alessandri, and though the family still kept up their palace in the city, the Castle on the height was allowed to drift into decay, till by the year 1637 only the Lord Francesco lived here with a little son of ten years old named Giovan' Antonio and a maiden aunt of seventy years. This Francesco was, it is said, a fierce and dreadful man, but yet so scrupulous in religious observances, that the priest never dared to commence a mass until he came back from the chase to attend it. One day his hunting detained the congregation waiting so long that the priest at length began to say mass. The Count returned, and finding his reverence already at the altar, he was seized with rage, fired his gun at him, and killed him on the spot.

By the time the boy Giovan' Antonio was twenty-three years of age, both his father and aunt had died and the only inhabitants of the great Castle were

this lonely youth and his page (*famulus*), a lad of eighteen.<sup>1</sup>

The next year he brought up to Vincigliata a bride, whose name was Angela Albertini of Settignano. She was accompanied by her tire-maiden named Antonia, but did not long endure the solitude of the ancient place, for she died within the year.

The following spring 'Giovan' Antonio married a Spanish lady, Donna Eleonora Brignosa, whose family had probably come to Florence in the train of the Grand Duchess Eleonora da Toledo, and who bore him sons and daughters to bring a little life back again to the old Castle. By 1664 the chronicle enumerates five children. Francesco aged ten, Jacopo nine, Maria Anna eight, Ginevra seven, and Filippo six years old.

The Lady Eleanor possibly grew tired of living so far from town, or else about this time the Alessandri built the more modern villa at the foot of the hill of Vincigliata, which for a long time after this formed the summer quarters of the family. Certain it is they left the Castle and henceforth a peasant or agent named Michael Galassi, with his wife and child are chronicled as its only inhabitants; and so it decays till 1751, when the entry on the parish register is "No

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<sup>1</sup> Church registers of Vincigliata. *Stato delle anime* from 1637 to 1769.

one inhabits the ruined palace of the Signori Alessandri, but the holy water is still sprinkled in the empty rooms as Easter comes round." Then we hear of other villas in the parish falling into decay, and the priest goes round giving his blessing on empty walls, and receiving a dozen eggs from the peasant as tithes.

In 1757 a few poor families still live in the surrounding houses. In one "Villa di Mezzana" the lawns serve as pasturage; and in another—"the Castel di Poggio" which has fallen together with its old enemy—the priest enters in his Easter book "I give the holy water but for these two years past the *fattore* will not let me enter. At Vincigliata there is a room kept for Signor Giovanni Alessandri when he comes." The next year even this is given up, and the palace serves as a barn for the hay of the peasants; in 1766 it is not even safe for that, and is locked up, the *contadino* keeping the key, till in 1827 Signor Gaetano di Simone Alessandri sells the ruins and land to Lorenzo di Bartolommeo Galli da Rovezzano. This purchaser seems to have made no practical use of it, for the late Baron Alfred von Reumont, author of a charming book entitled "Majano, Vincigliata, Settignano," describes it as he saw it in 1855, in these words :

"From Settignano I ascended to these ruins marked

out by a double circle of walls, of which the exterior one had in many places entirely disappeared. I entered, by the only door left standing, into the court, which leads to a ground floor with vaulted roofs half ruined, and above which the quadrangular walls rise and threaten to fall. The remains of the stairs and loggia and the fragments of battlements and cornices are buried under a heap of blocks of masonry, and stones, overgrown with thorns, nettles, and creeping plants."

It is little to be wondered at, that when a new purchaser offered, who saw the capabilities of the place, the nephews of signor Galli were more than willing to cede their heritage to Mr. Temple-Leader — but with his name begins a new era — the rise of Vincigliata.

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### THE RESTORATION.

As signor Marcotti remarks (*Vincigliata*, pag. 10): "Vincigliata was dead, and was being buried by degrees; only a few broken bones of the skeleton being visible under the stony covering which time had thrown over it."

Here is documental evidence of the fact, not a fragment from State archives, but a statement in rustic

Italian by the hands of the peasant who tilled the fields of the *podere* near. We will translate it:

" To the most illustrious signor Giovanni my master, — the note of the tower as at present. Inside there was a big door half above ground and half under, on the right was a fruit garden, and on the left the cellar, over the hut in the court there grew a vine which spread all around, and in Father's time there was also the tower, but when the roof was taken off the walls fell down. . . .

" I, GIOV. BATTISTA MERLAZZI.

" 7 December 1857. "

Around these dreary ruins the new possessor walked, possibly dreaming of the many scenes that had taken place there while the ruined walls and towers were still erect; and then charmed with the cool breezes that blew round the hill, and the lovely plains spread out below him, he thought what a fine site it would be for a villa during the summer months. But the historical interest of the place was too strong, — the idea of a modern villa was soon given up, and the possessor was fired with the idea of a complete and perfect restoration. Vincigliata should become an illustration of that feudal era which had passed away, the walls that Hawkwood had stormed, and to which the Albizi and Alessandri had fled, should rise again

stronger than ever; the battlemented tower should once more crown the crest of the hill; arms should shine in the armoury; and where ancient Florentines had ruled, there, shields and blazons should still perpetuate their memories.

In looking for an architect Mr. Leader's choice fell on Giuseppe Fancelli — son of his own fattore (farm agent) — a talented young man who was beginning life with that exaltation of his art which marks all true artists. He had studied the old masters who had made Florence, — Giotto, Arnolfo, Brunelleschi, and Orgagna, but the classical influence of the schools had as yet chiefly influenced him. Mr. Leader now proceeded to train his taste in feudal architecture by taking him to see many of the existing medieval castles etc., such as those of the Malaspini in the Lunigiana, and some ancient Tuscan buildings, all of which left their impress on his art.

In choosing Fancelli and training him to the work, Mr. Leader ensured to himself the advantage of an architect whom he could so far command, as to keep him closely to his own ideal of true restoration, without modern innovations.

It was fitting that the architect should be, as it were, a son of the soil, for being born at San Martino a Mensola (April 24<sup>th</sup> 1829) Fancelli's very earliest recollections must have been connected with the ruins on the hill

at the foot of which he dwelt; and who knows whether the very building whose restoration was his master piece and last work, was not also the first inspiration of his career! Being the son of a fattore, he was bred to country life, but some of his ancestors had been architects and sculptors,<sup>1</sup> and as soon as he was of an age to choose, he exchanged the vineyards and olive fields, for the art school at the Belle Arti; which he entered in December 1842. On leaving it in 1849, he was apprenticed to the architect cavalier Mariano Falcini, and won prizes in competitions at Siena in 1851, and Florence in 1852; he also assisted cavalier G. Baccani in the restoration of the Pergola Opera house in 1856. This was the man whom Mr. Leader chose for the work at Vincigliata<sup>2</sup> and we can imagine the enthusiasm he threw into his studies of feudal architecture and how he explored every old castle he could find.

Then the rocky height became a busy scene; the vine was torn away from the rubbish which kind nature had placed it to hide; the trees in the quadrangle were uprooted, and the well of the Castle cleared out;

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<sup>1</sup> In the Boboli gardens there is a good figure of Vulcan sculptured in marble by Chiarissimo Fancelli, one of the ancestors of the architect.

<sup>2</sup> Signor Fancelli also built the chapel of Mr. Leader's villa at Maiano. The villa itself was added to by the prof. com. Felice Francolini.

for every idle traveller who came to stroll in the ruins had cast stones into it, and the crumbling walls had added to the work, so that it was entirely choked.

Little by little the plan grew into form, and month by month, there arose, from the ashes of dead Vincigliata, the barbican, the keep and the tower, the cloister and quadrangle of a new Vincigliata. Every fragment of the old building which could be retained found its office in the new. The wall of the keep with the Alessandri arms in the keystone of its arched gateway is the original wall. The foliated bracket which still remained in the wall, where it had existed for more than five hundred years — retained by Mr. Leader's especial wish, the place of honour in upholding the central arch of the roof of the loggia. When in 1874 the Grand Duke of Saxe Weimar came with his family to visit the Castle in which he had a special interest, having lately restored his own feudal castle of Wartburg — a much grander work — he took particular notice of this stone, which he said "had done for Vincigliata what the fossil bone had done for Cuvier who from it could imagine and reconstruct the entire skeleton of an antediluvian monster."

Nor was Mr. Leader less fortunate in his artisans than he was in his architect. He found the archæological and artistic spirit strong in them, for the Italian people are bred on legend and story. The barefoot

peasant will read Ariosto and Tasso, and have a clearer idea of the Paladins than he has of the Parliament; and a stone cutter from Settignano has still the aroma of Michael Angelo hanging about him, and will not only talk of *quattrocento* and *cinquecento* sculpture, but will make his chips fly from his chisel and bring those very *cinquecento* forms out of the stone.

Such an artist of the chisel was David Giustini, a stone cutter from Settignano, where stone has been a medium of art for centuries; and such an one was Angelo Marucelli, an honest workman, whom his comrades called "Canapino." These two between them did all the decorative sculpture, and have touched every point with beauty. All the doors, external and internal, are carved in arch, architrave, lintel and lunette. Every bracket which supports either arch or gallery, is either foliated or grotesque; on pillar, stair, and wall, is some carved form, and every form is purely medieval.

The busts of the two stone carvers are placed one on each side of the armoury door in the quadrangle, and the architect has a niche in the loggia, so that though all the three have passed away, their memory still lives in durable marble, like their works. The architect Fancelli succumbed to miliary fever at the early age of 38; the rustic sculptor David Giustini died at a riper age; his elder son follows up his pro-

fession, and his widow and two younger sons have a permanent home as custodians in the Castle which he helped to adorn.

The situation of Vineigliata is an ideal one for a feudal fortress, it stands on an elevated rocky plateau down the side of which the Mensola and Trassinara leap over the crags, while a deep valley lies between it and the sandstone rocks and quarries of the Fiesole hill, where the dark cliffs rise strata above strata, bored with dark quarries.

The outer walls form an irregular square whose circumference is 370 metres; the North side measuring 40 metres, the South 60, the East 120 metres, and the West 150.

The barbican tower which contains the principal entrance, stands at the N. W. corner, and a smaller tower is placed at the N. E. angle: on the other sides machicolations are thrown out, and at the corners are turrets supported on stone brackets. Within this the *ballium*, or bailey, in the form of garden and vineyard surrounds the massive keep, which in true feudal style is furnished with tower and inner bailey, with gallery and court; — but we will reserve for the next chapter a more precise description, which for greater clearness we will put in the form of a *catalogue raisonné*.

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## DESCRIPTIVE.

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### THE OUTER BALLIUM.

It may be said of the present owner of the Castle that he found a wilderness, and made it a garden. The ruins of the old Castle (Castellaccio, as it was called) were a heap of stones on a bare and barren hill, neither tree nor shrub grew there to break the wild monotony of the rocks and stones, except a few pollard oaks and broom,<sup>1</sup> with here and there a patch of burnt up grass. Now the whole hill is clad in a green vesture of pines, cypresses and ilex, which clothe it in beauty alike in winter and summer; the seasons being only marked by the flowers beneath them.

Through this vast plantation the road winds in many turns, which the pedestrian shortens by plunging

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<sup>1</sup> The Spanish broom was called *Vinci*, and was used to bind faggots. It is possible that this was the origin of the name *Vincigliata*.

into the forest paths, and following the vagrant tracks, sometimes coming across traces of the ancient mule road which the dwellers and besiegers must alike have trodden, in the days gone by, when Vincigliata was a feudal stronghold.

In the old tracks beneath the pines we stray one morning in September. The Castle which has been as a beacon to us, during the drive from the city, when we saw it standing out firm and strong on its eminence in the blue distance, now disappears from view and we feel lost in the mazes of the pines. Now and then a few battlements emerge above the trees in some more open space, but it is not till the last turn, that we perceive its outer walls, over which vines and olives are visible in the terraced enclosure and far above them rises the Castle with its bastions and battlements. So square and massive is it that we can describe it in no other words than those old Napier used for the medieval fortress of Semifonte in Val d'Elsa. "The *Rocca* (citadel)," he says, "was quadrangular, magnificent, beautiful and inconceivably strong, its walls studded with towers and battlements, beetling out from their summits, and with turrets hanging from every corner of the bulwark."

In fact Vincigliata appears to our eyes in the sombre light of a clouded grey morning, the very embodiment of the feudal architecture of the middle

ages. There is an iron postern gate in the outer wall; we do not however enter, but pass round the circuit till we reach the barbican, whose machicolated towers rise behind the bridge. In these peaceful days the simulated moat<sup>1</sup> is dry, and its banks fringed with iris and Virginia creeper, while cypresses and ilex trees sway peacefully above it. The bridge too is no longer the exclusive drawbridge, but a solid structure which does not suggest the necessity of shutting out a foe. The first gate admits us to an open space, with coach-house and stables on the right, and on the left, servants' rooms of solid stone masonry. In the centre the great iron gate of the barbican confronts us with the Leader arms surmounting it, and above them a shrine carved in stone, with a relief of St. Lawrence, by David Giustini.

Entering the gate we may admire from within, the architecture of the barbican, which is perfectly medieval, with its projecting machicolations supported on brackets. The gallery which encircles it is a continuation of the rampart on the walls and is supported on Lombard pillars resting on grotesque animals. Our steps now lead us through the *ballium*, or bailey, which in these peaceful days is rather a garden than a warlike quadrangle, as it contains great Le-

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<sup>1</sup> The position does not admit of a real moat.

banon cedars, tall cypresses, oaks, and bay trees, and on the southern side a sunny vineyard and fruit garden. All this is bounded by the wall with its high rampart and battlements, but our glances fall on many a work of ancient art, enshrined in the wall, for having no military use for his Castle, Mr. Leader has made it historical by placing here a collection of memorials of past ages in Tuscany etc. We begin with the earliest inhabitants, the Etruscans, whose tombs form the most eloquent pages of ancient history. Leaving the barbican gate, there is a niche to the right containing :

1. An Etruscan funereal urn, in terracotta, with the inscription, which in Roman letters would read :

ARNZ A CAPSNA SETHRNAL.

On the front is a relief, representing Jason or Cadmus, fighting the warriors who sprang from the Dragon's teeth. Near this is

2. Another urn, without inscription, on the front of which is the combat between Eteocles and Polynices sons of Oedipus and Jocasta; behind each of the brothers is a winged genius bearing a torch. One of the most beautiful myths in the Etruscan religion was the belief in guardian angels or *genii*.

3. On the third sarcophagus lies the recumbent figure of an "obese Etruscan," seeming sublimely in-

different to the scene of sorrow represented in the relief beneath him — a parting scene between a dying husband and his wife, a winged genius (death) stands behind the husband. The next is

4. A much restored Etruscan urn in tufo — no inscription. The relief is the combat between Eteocles and Polynices, on the left stands a nude winged female genius bearing a torch.

5. This is a child's funereal urn in terracotta. It has on the front a winged head of the Gorgon between two pilasters, with a cypress on each side.

6. A heart-shaped shield with the arms of the Republic and the motto *LIBERTAS*.

7. Shield with Medici arms and other quarterings.

8. A small terracotta Etruscan urn without inscription. Subject: Jason with the ploughshare.

9. Armorial bearings in majolica. Device: a star and lion's jaw, — signed V.B. 1507.

10. Archaic stone cist.

11. A large stone Madonna and Child in a niche, with a border of coloured fruit in Della Robbia style; beneath it a coat of arms — lion rampant bearing a staff.

12. A Ciborium sculptured in stone with ornate scrolls in *quattrocento* style.

13. The Strozzi arms in marble.

14. Opposite the gate of the keep is a large arched

recess in the wall with a fresco of St. Christopher carrying the Child Jesus. The giant Saint is a favourite emblem in Italian medieval art, and finds a prominent place in nearly every feudal building in Italy; appropriately so, as he is the emblem of strength that bows down to no earthly power, but only to the powers above. He was usually depicted opposite the entrance door, for a belief existed that any one whose gaze on going out of the Castle first fell on St. Christopher, would not die a violent death on that day. Beneath the fresco are the following Latin lines expressive of this superstition :

*Christophori faciem die quacumque tueris  
Illa nempe die morte mala non morieris.*

In this fresco Cav. Bianchi has happily reproduced the naïveté and quaint style of the *trecento* artists, and so rendered it quite in keeping with its surroundings.

15. Shield carved in marble with the device of an eagle and lion rampant.

16. Arms in majolica, much injured by time. Device: two deer.

17. The arms of the Scala family with quarterings.

Here the wall ends, or rather takes a turn, a wide flight of steps leading to a lower level: we will however not descend them now, but turn towards the keep, which rises solidly before us. Here we see a veritable portion of the original Castle. This fine

arched doorway with the Alessandri arms in the key-stone, is the door which was described as "half under ground half above it." Now the whole arch is free and has moreover a great nail-studded door. At the corners of the keep are two ancient iron lamps, and on the left the watch tower rises up showing its ragged edges against the blue sky contrasted with the dark cypresses behind it.

The Custode opens a small portion of the gate, we step over it and enter the inner ballium or quadrangle.

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#### THE QUADRANGLE OF THE KEEP.

A Court, medieval and artistic such as Arnolfo himself would have built, strong and massive, yet with such a touch of art on every key-stone and arch, that the strength is merged in beauty. On one side the tower of the keep rises up, with its massive stone-bound windows, its machicolations, and Guelphic battlements; below it, at right angles, runs the jagged outline of the rampart on the summit of the solid walls.

The square architecture of the Castle is enriched by a double row of projecting galleries. The upper

one is of brick with stone pillars and brackets; the lower — which forms a terrace to the apartments on the upper floor — is supported on brick arches springing from stone brackets; its balustrade is finished by a dog-tooth moulding, while in the spring of each arch is a projecting head of grey stone. Here are a sphinx, a female head, a lion, ram, bull, and several monsters serving as gargoyle.<sup>1</sup> This gallery is reached by an outer staircase of stone, the base of which is guarded in Florentine fashion by a Marzocco or lion, carrying the Leader Arms, and placed on an octagonal column, with the armorial bearings of former Lords of Vincigliata on the base. In the corner opposite the steps stands the traditional well, and on the right as we enter, there is a "loggia" (arcade) of two wide arches supported on an octagonal column, and two pilasters; all with foliated capitals. The vaulted roof is of brick with stone ribs, and the bracket which supports the rib of the central arch, is one of the veritable remains of the old Castle.

The tone of the whole quadrangle, though on a smaller scale, recalls the court of the Bargello (which, however, was only restored some years after Vincigliata), but there is a feeling of calm repose about this, which gives one a very different and more do-

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<sup>1</sup> The gargoyle were sculptured by Angiolo Marucelli called Canapino.

mestic impression, than the reminiscences of cruel justice, and more cruel injustice recalled by the Florentine Palace. As in the Bargello, the walls here are full of sculptured armorial bearings, but for the most part they are suggestive of peaceful Lordship, rather than fierce party strife, and a stern Podestà.

We seat ourselves on the fine old wooden *sedili* which are placed round three sides of the loggia, and even these have soothing reminiscences, for in olden times they have been the seats of meditative Dominican friars, in the convent of Santa Maria Novella, from whence they were brought.

Resting here our eyes fall on numberless specimens of medieval and ancient art, and archæology. Here are Roman amphoræ and Etruscan urns, emblems of the life and death of the races which peopled this hill before Florence was even imagined; there are medieval saints that tell us of the early Christians who lived here long after the last Etruscan was closed in his tomb, with his Gods and his Lares about him; and there are modern inscriptions speaking of the present, but we will take a more systematic inspection and begin from the great door by which we have entered. It is a fine door of Spanish chestnut adorned with scrolls in iron work, and large headed nails. The arms of the Alessandri and Leader families (the ancient

and modern possessors) are sculptured in the arch,<sup>1</sup> and on each side within the court are

1. Large torch holders and extinguishers in massive iron work. It was here the page and squire placed their torches to illumine the court, or put them out when their Lord came home at night from some emprise.

2. Over the door is a species of frieze in the form of an architrave, on which are sculptured the arms of the Pazzi, which came from the old Villa of the Pazzi di Val d' Arno at Maiano (now Villa Leader), and two other Florentine families who have been connected with Vincigliata. High over the door, in the wall is

3. A medallion in glazed terracotta, — the Madonna and Child surrounded by a garland of fruit, a copy of Della Robbia by Ginori.

4. A bas-relief in marble, representing the Eternal Father in the act of blessing.

5. The Christian monogram IHS, placed in a double circlet with the motto "TIBI Soli" above, the date 1633 below, and the initial T and G on the two sides. The letters refer to its former owner Tommaso Guadagni. These three objects seem a benediction on those who enter, and give the strong gate of the Castle a sentiment very opposite to that gate of "Dis" where the wayfarer who entered was enjoined to "leave every

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<sup>1</sup> The Alessandri without, and Leader within the gate; the former are the original ones from the old Castle.

hope behind him." On the ground at the left of the entrance is

6. A square block of old masonry, a part of the third circuit of the ancient walls of Florence, which were destroyed in 1868, when the city was enlarged with the fallacious hope of its remaining the capital of the new united kingdom of Italy.

7. On the wall is a stone with the following inscription: *Giovanni Temple-Leader, gentiluomo inglese, a dì 5 marzo 1855 acquistò i ruderi del castello di Vincigliata colle rispettive attinenze, dai fratelli Ferdinando, Antonio, Piero, Bartolommeo e Giuseppe Pasquale del fu Vincenzo Galli da Rovezzano, pei rogiti di ser Ferdinando Cartoni notaro pubblico fiorentino.*<sup>1</sup>

Beneath the loggia :

8. Roman amphora from Aquileia.

9. Eleven lamps in iron work of the style of Niccolò Caparra affixed to the wall. They are all of different designs, as are the foliated brackets which suspend them, and are beautiful copies of *cinquecento* metal work, from the forge of Contri of Settignano.

10. In a strong wooden frame on the ground is

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<sup>1</sup> *Translation:* John Temple-Leader, English gentleman, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1855 bought the ruins of the Castle of Vincigliata, with the respective appurtenances, of the brothers Ferdinando, Antonio, Piero, Bartolommeo and Giuseppe Pasquale sons of the late Vincenzo Galli of Rovezzano, the deeds being drawn up by ser Ferdinando Cartoni public notary of Florence.

a fine bronze bell dated 1256 of very rich pure tone, with two lines of inscription in Gothic letters. The upper line runs MENTE SANCTA SPONTANEUM HONOREM DIO ET PATRIE LIBERATIONIS, and the second line GIANNI MI FECIT ANNO DOMINI MCCLVI. Here the good Gianni's learning and ideas seem to have failed, for he has filled up the remainder of the circlet with the alphabet arranged in the following eccentric manner: LMMNOP (two forms of the letter M) ABCDEFGHIJK. This interesting old bell came from Bucine. The Prior had, on obtaining money for new bells, given this to a bronze founder at Pistoia, to be melted down, but it was saved from such an ignominious fate, and bought by Mr. Leader. The inscription is one which has been used on other old bells (one in the Bargello having a similar sentence). Mr. Leader thinks it a proof that the bell was a thank-offering after a victory, while signor Del Badia believes it a quotation from an antiphon in the office of St. Agatha, before it was reformed by the Council of Trent. On the wall the three principal figures are

11. A Madonna and Child,
12. St. Francis of Assisi, and
13. St. Clare. Three beautiful statues or rather high reliefs of the Della Robbia school. St. Francis and his disciple St. Clare — also a native of Assisi, and founder of the order of the Claresse — are in grey robes the

folds of which are simple and artistic. The attitude of both is very devotional, as they kneel in adoration on each side of the Madonna, who, clad in a blue robe and purple bodice with white veil and wimple, holds the divine Child at the breast, half kneeling on her lap. The three figures, now detached, once formed part of a lunette in the suppressed convent of Monte Domini, which is now a Florentine almshouse (Pia Casa di Lavoro) for the poor and aged. The statuettes are probably the work of Andrea Della Robbia or one of his sons, as the colouring points to a later time than Luca himself, in whose works the figures were nearly always white on a blue ground. Below these are

14 and 15. An "Epiphany" and "Resurrection." Two small reliefs in terracotta, with remains of glazing proving them to be by a follower of Della Robbia. One has evidently been restored in old times, as a portion of it is reproduced in wood, so enamelled that it is only recognisable by the sound, and the worm holes in the wooden part.

16 and 17. Two amphoræ also from Aquileia are in the corner.

18. Life size terracotta bust of Andrea Doria, the great Genoese Admiral of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (1468-1560). Though first an opponent, he became an ally of the Emperor Charles V and liberated Genoa from the French

tyranny. He is represented with a long beard and has a very astute, intelligent face.

19. An Etruscan funereal chest in terracotta, the relief in the front represents the strife between Eteocles and Polynices. This, and "Jason killing with his plough the teeth-sprung warriors" are the most common subjects for the smaller and least important Etruscan tombs; they were a kind of stock tomb which the sculptor kept on hand for those who could not afford to have an original design executed.

20. An oval relief in Carrara marble, representing the profile head of Antonio Buonvisi. This is especially interesting to English people, from the fact of his being such a true friend to Sir Thomas More. At that time Buonvisi, a rich merchant of Lucca, had large branch houses in London, and at Antwerp, so rich was the family that in 1606 their patrimony was estimated at 1,357,900 scudi. During More's imprisonment the Italian merchant was one of the kind supporters of his family, and he even found means to send delicacies to Sir Thomas More in his prison. Padre Regi, in his *Life of More* written at Bologna in 1881, gives a letter written by the Chancellor to Buonvisi, a short time before his execution. It ends thus:

"O most faithful of friends, and, as I am proud to style you, sweet pupil of mine eyes, may you live in happy health, and may your family, to whom I

render homage, follow always from good fortune to better." The signature which is very significant runs thus:

" THOMAS MORE.

" It is superfluous to add " yours," as you already know that I am yours, you having bought me with so many benefits, besides I am this day in such a condition that there is little to show to whom I belong."

The Ex-High Chancellor's wish was granted, the Buonvisi continued to prosper and rise, for among Antonio's descendants were Cardinals of Rome, and Bishops of Lucca. The family is now extinct, though one of its members was immortalized in a sonnet by Milton who had visited him at Lucca. On the wall above this portrait is

21. A statue of Christ seated, with one hand uplifted in benediction, the date is probably about 1400. It appears to have come from the façade of some church.

22. Is another oval relief — pendant to n. 20 — a portrait of " Castruccio degli Antelmini " also a famous Lucchese, he is better known as Castruccio Castracane. Capponi (*Storia di Firenze*, lib. III, cap. I) calls him " Castruccio degli *Interminelli*." He was a great captain and fought much against the Florentines early in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. He had before this been a soldier in England. Over Castruccio is

23. A sitting statue of an Evangelist with Gospel

in hand, of the same style of art as the Christ above mentioned.

24. A group in high relief in white marble representing a bishop seated and a deacon kneeling in supplication before him. The style is quite medieval, or rather early christian, probably about A.D.500. Near this is an interesting

25. Bust of Pier Capponi in terracotta. The sturdy old Florentine burgher, who in the 15<sup>th</sup> century was so manful in defending the liberty of the Republic, has an honest good face, and wears the long hair customary at the time. The dignified folds of the "lucco" give majesty to the bust.

26. The central object on this side of the loggia is a statue of St. Stephen, in white marble. The short proportions of the figure would point to the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century, as its date, the face is exceedingly soft and womanly but very devotional, the robes are full and graceful. In his hand he holds a stone. The early sculptor must have taken his inspiration from the *Aurea leggenda*, by Jacopo da Voragine, of which an Italian translation was one of the first works printed at Venice in 1475. A part of the story runs thus:

"The Jews having envy and hatred towards Stephen, and desiring to overcome him, undertook to confound him in three ways — by disputation, by witnesses, and by tortures. But he overcame the disputants,

declared the witnesses false, and triumphed over his torments, for heaven helped him in each trial. In the first, the holy spirit was given him that he should speak well; in the second, a heavenly face which terrified the false witnesses, and all who were seated in council saw his countenance as it had been the face of an angel." This is evidently the moment the sculptor has tried to represent. The pedestal to this first soldier of the Church militant is formed by

27. A *cippus* of white marble in commemoration of a more worldly warrior, a Roman soldier, native of Florence. The inscription is:

Q. TERSINA Q. F.  
SCAP. LVPVS  
FLOREN. MILES  
COH. XII. VRB. ET DEX  
TRI GENIVM  
CENTVRIAECVM  
B A S E M A R M O R E A  
TESTAMENTO  
PONI IVSSIT

And on the right side:

POSITA IDIB. APRIL.  
MAMERTINO ET RVFO  
COSS.

This *cippus* is illustrated in Gori's *Etruscan Inscriptions* printed in Florence in 1726, from which we learn that it was found in the gardens of the Duca

di Salviati at Rome in 1573; that the brave Florentine Tersina was a soldier of the Legion Scaptia, which contained many Florentines, and to which Julius Cæsar himself had belonged. He fought in A. D. 182, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the reign of Commodus, for that is the year marked by the consulship of Caius P. Mamertinus, and Cornelius Rufus. Above this military record is

28. A fine bracket bearing the arms of the Zati, the ancestors of the Duca di San Clemente, and former owners of a Villa at San Martino a Mensola. The device is two chains crossed at honor point; it supports a group of sculpture, a Madonna crowned and seated on a Gothic throne, with the Child Jesus in her arms. St. Peter with his keys stands on one side, and St. Paul holds his sword on the other, two angels kneel in adoration in front.

29 and 30. Parallel with this are two busts of *cinquecento* Florentines, similar in style to that of Capponi; and still higher above these is

31. An Etruscan tomb, with a male figure recumbent on the lid, and holding the *patera*, a shallow drinking cup. It is a small urn in terracotta, colored, and was in the great collection of the late Giacomo Servadio M. P. for Montepulciano.

32. A similar urn with the inscription, which in Roman letters would read:

THANA · APIA · ATAMAL · THANSISA ·

and proves that this urn contained the ashes of a certain Etruscan lady "Fannia Appia." This was a well known family in Roman times, and belonged to the *gens* Claudia, among whose members were the Patrician Appius Claudius the Decemvir, and Appius Claudius Cæcus the Censor, who commenced the Via Appia B. C. 312. The subject of the sculpture on the front of the urn represents Jason or Cadmus, vanquishing with a ploughshare the teeth-sprung warriors. The lid at present on this tomb cannot be the original, as it is a male figure and in a different clay.

33. Two medieval figures holding shields.
34. A female bust in terracotta.
35. Is another Etruscan urn in tufo, with the inscription, which in Roman letters would be :

LTH · TITI · PRANA · ATAINALISA ·

Lars Titius Atainal (filius) whose ashes were enclosed in this urn was probably an ancestor of the Roman family of TITIA, whose coins we find, struck in the time of the Republic, about 100 years B. C.

36 and 37. Two amphoræ from Aquileia fill the corner. One is a peculiarly graceful shape with long curves. Near these on the third side of the loggia are

38 and 39. Two very interesting specimens of antique sculpture ; the busts in relief of "Flora" and "Pomona." They are carved in a beautiful rose tinted

antique marble, and the eyes are in coloured glass, which would point to the decadence after Hadrian as their date. Flora wears flowers in her hair and long braids hanging on the shoulders, in the style of some Etruscan statues. Pomona has fruit and long ribbons in place of plaited tresses. Under these is placed

40. A part of an ancient frieze in white marble representing "a group of Cupids or *genii* around the forge of Vulcan," while he is making the arms of Achilles (*Iliad*, chap. XVIII). The figures of the "loves" are exquisitely modelled, one plays with the crested helmet, another with the shield. Minerva with her ægis stands on one side, and Neptune on the other. From ancient art we now come to modern.

41. A niche beautifully sculptured in grey stone by David Giustini contains the bust in white marble of Giuseppe Fancelli, the architect who superintended the restoration of the Castle. It is a faithful portrait by the late sculptor Bastianini, and shows well the broad massive head. Beneath it is this inscription in gilt letters :

A

GIUSEPPE FANCELLI DA S. MARTINO A MENSOLA  
ARCHITETTO  
DIRETTORE DEI RESTAURI DEL CASTELLO  
DI VINCIGLIATA  
QUESTA MEMORIA  
GIOVANNI TEMPLE-LEADER  
PONEVA.

42. A quaint realistic old relief in grey marble, representing Count Ugolino in the tower. The artist has certainly read his Dante and represents the famished Count, in the midst of his appalled family, biting his hands,

.... le mani per dolor mi morsi

while little "Gaddo" throws himself at his father's feet in terror and anguish.

This relief, which has all the force of expression that frequently marks a low style of art, was presented to Mr. Leader by the Prezziner family.

43. Another amphora hangs beside the door leading to the apartments on the lower floor of the Castle. The lunette of the arch of the door is enriched by a "rose" in perforated sculpture with the Christian monogram, and around it the inscription " NOMINI JESU OMNE GENUFLECTATUR CELESTIUM TERRESTRIVM ET INFER- NORUM."

We are now outside the loggia again, and in the corner of the court where the Castle well is placed, but there are several things to be seen in the few yards of wall before we reach the well, such as

44. The Papal arms (cross keys) in stone.

45. A slab of Egyptian hieroglyphics about a foot in diameter, containing several rows of small figures; and

46. A beautiful Gothic fountain in the form of an

arch resting on two twisted marble columns, inlaid with mosaics in the style of those of *San Paolo fuori le mura* at Rome. Above the arch rises a gable richly sculptured and with crouching lions on each side. The back of the niche is filled in with open sculpture, and the base shows the arms of the Usimbardi and Alessandri. The antique portion probably dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century when the Saracenic art of inlaid sculpture was imported from the East. Near this is

47. A stone with the following Latin inscription :

SILVANO · AVG · SACRVM  
CRESCENS · ALYPIANVS  
IMP · CAESARIS · NERVAE  
TRAIANI · AVG · GERM  
DACICI · DISP · FISCI · F · R ·

It is a votive offering to the God Sylvanus the woodland deity, by Crescens Alypianus, a civil officer under the Emperor Trajan.

48. A medallion of white marble, the profile head of a young Florentine, recalling the style of Masaccio, in very low relief (*rilievo stiacciato*). We now reach the corner occupied by the Castle well.

49. The well, which was found filled up with stones, is now, once more, one of the most characteristic objects in the Castle. Its ancient octagonal form is retained, and the native sculptor Marucelli has en-

riched it with all kinds of medieval work; the panels forming the parapet, contain the arms of the Usimbardi, Alessandri, and Leader. The pulley for the bucket is of massive wrought iron of antique form, and it is held in the mouth of a winged dragon crouched on a pillar covered with the lilies of Anjou. On the left

50. Another small pila or basin, with a relief in marble above it, representing St. Paul. It was taken from a sepulchral monument of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and bears the date 1333, and the inscription in Gothic letters: *Cujus corpus requiescat in pace.*

51. There is still another basin or fountain in the wall close by, with a fine grotesque head as spout. Over it

52. An inscription in Gothic letters and two shields bearing arms, one the Piccolomini, the other the Scala. Over this again

53. An Etruscan tomb, in *tufo*, with a relief representing a Temple, with six figures in togas. The recumbent figure is of a lady with a fan and veil.

54. Is the shield of the Acciajuoli, a lion rampant.

55. A Latin inscription:

D · M ·  
 L · IVLIVS · APOLLONIVS · ET  
 L · IVLIVS · KARICVS  
 FECERVNT  
 SIBI · ET · SVIS · ET · LIBERTIS  
 LIBERTABVSQVE · POSTERISQVE  
 EORVM  
 ET · NEQVIS · ALIENIGERVVM  
 CORPVS · INFERRE · VELLIT · ITEM  
 NE · DE · NOMEN · IVLIORVM · EXIAT  
 HVIC · MONVMENTO · DOLVS  
 MALVS · ABESTO ·

Probably it was placed over the tomb of the Julian family, to record that the sepulchre was for their exclusive use. And above this is another

56. Shield in white marble with the device — a lion rampant, surrounded with a ribbon.

57. A statue, life size, of St. John Baptist in grey stone, an emaciated figure in the realistic style of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It came from an old house in Borgo Santa Croce, Florence. Over this is a

58. Small majolica inscription :

BACCIO · DI · MANE  
 NTE · BVON DEL MONTE  
 VICHARIO · L<sup>o</sup> · 1617 · EP · L<sup>o</sup>  
 SECONDA · L AN<sup>o</sup> · 1618.

With this we may mention

59. Another inscription which is placed at the

meeting of the two arches of the loggia, and records a certain "Rosso dei Buondelmonti," as captain and *commissario* of the Florentine Republic in 1528 and 1529. With the tragical love story of the first Buondelmonte, spoken of in Dante, began all the wars of Guelphs and Ghibellines, and it would seem the family had kept up its power in Florence for many centuries after that, as one is here recorded as bishop, and another as captain of the Republic. Over the Vicar's tablet is a

60. Latin inscription of rather an awe inspiring character, being an anathema of that terrible Pope Gregory XI. It runs :

† ANATHEMA · GREGORII · PAPE · XI ·  
IN · IVDICIO · NON · RESVRGAT · DAMNATVS · MALE · PEREAT ·  
CVM · IVDA · INIQVO · PARTEM · HABEAT ·  
SI · QVIS · HVNC · LOCVM · QUOVIS · MODO ·  
SIVE · INGENIO · VIOLARE · PRESVMPSERIT ·

As a kind of antidote to this the next space is occupied by

61. A charming Madonna and Child with two angels, in the style of Della Robbia. The round is encircled by the usual garland of flowers and fruit, with little cherubs' heads peeping out from among them.

62. A relief in white marble, a cherub holding a shield bearing the lion rampant of the Acciajuoli; and next to it

63. Another shield bearing the same device with a *paly* of three under the lion, in dark stone.

64. A mock Latin inscription purporting to be the *votum* of Sextus Publicius, but is only a catch in modern Italian.

65. Shield,—goat rampant with a Gothic inscription.

66. An interesting piece of medieval sculpture which was brought from Lucca. It is in two parts, on the right a seated figure of St. Bartholomew, with a young priest, possibly Gherardo, kneeling before him. The figures are rude in proportion and modelling, and are crowded very uncomfortably into a niche too small for them. The left side of the slab is occupied with the following inscription :

QVISQVIS ADES SCITO DÑVM LAUDABIS ET ITO  
 QVOD DOM ISTA DEI SCI QUOQ BARTOLOMEI  
 TPE FVNDATA FVIT ET PARITER RENOVATA  
 XPI MILLENO QVINQUAGENO Q. NOVENO  
 CVM BIS CENTENO NVMERO SIQVIDEM BENE PLENO  
 SACRA RECOLEBAT HIC ET PARITER RESIDEBAT  
 NOMINE GERARD NEC AD HEC NOVA MENIA TARD  
 EX STVDIO CVJUS TEMPLI STAT CULM ET HVJUS  
 PERSPICVA CVRA MOSTRAT QVEM SCULPTA FIGVRA.

67. Above this an inscription on majolica :

GIOVANNI · D  
 I · TOMASO · LA  
 PI · V · ECOM ·  
 1502 E · 1503 ·

Probably this John Lapi was vicar of the same church as the Baccio Buondelmonte (n. 58) though he lived a century before him.

68. Is a rather coarse painting of Santa Barbara on brick; and the corner of the court is occupied by the

69. Arms of the Monte di Pascha,—a Pyramid of stones.

70. An amphora from Aquileia.

71. A marble round, with a skull in relief, and above it the words "respice finem."

72. Heraldic shield of the "Degli Agli,"—a lion rampant of the field, charged with *aglio* (a plant of garlic). The ancient palace of this family is still to be seen in Florence on the Piazza degli Agli near Santa Maria Maggiore.

73. Armorial bearings in grey stone,—a lion's head with a helmet and shield beneath, which bears the device of a lion rampant.

74. A small shield carved in stone. Device: a lion rampant of the field, charged with 15 wheels

75. The arms — (a Bear and Ragged Staff) — from the monument of Anna Dudley daughter of Robert Dudley, who claimed to be Earl of Warwick and Leicester and was created Duke of Northumberland in 1620 by the Emperor Ferdinand II. Robert Dudley, son of Robert Dudley Earl of Leicester and of the

Lady Douglas Sheffield, was born in 1573 and came to Florence where he was well received at the Tuscan court. He bought a house in the Via della Vigna Nuova at the corner of the street, looking into Via Tornabuoni, and lived many years in Florence; he was a great naval architect and designed the mole at Leghorn for the Grand Duke.

76. A very quaint fragment of sculpture in marble representing a potter's shop. One man is blowing a fire, another is pulling a vase out of the baking pot on it; while two others are carrying clay. The figures are the short medieval type. Near this

77. A tablet which is interesting in the history of the Castle, being a record of its purchase in 1827: *Lorenzo di Bartolommeo Galli da Rovezzano, addì 21 aprile 1827, comprò i ruderì del Castello di Vincigliata, coi suoi resedi, da Gaetano del Cav. Simone degli Alessandri, pei rogiti di Ser Luigi di Francesco Gavini, notaro pubblico Fiorentino.*<sup>1</sup>

78. Now we come to the finest bit of art in the court. A fine bas relief of veritable Roman sculpture, in Greek marble, representing a sacrifice. The fire is

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<sup>1</sup> *Translation:* On the 21<sup>st</sup> day of April 1827, Lorenzo son of Bartolommeo Galli of Rovezzano purchased the ruins of the Castle of Vincigliata, with its appurtenances, from Gaetano son of Cav<sup>re</sup> Simone of the Alessandri, the deeds being drawn up by Ser Luigi son of Francesco Gavini, public notary of Florence.

burning on an altar adorned with rams' heads and garlands, and the high priest in full robes is throwing into it the votive corn, while the other priests stand behind all crowned with laurels. One holds the vase of corn, another sounds the curved horn. The victim, a fine bull garlanded with roses, is led forward by the "carnifex" who is nude to the waist and brandishes his sacrificial knife. The whole is in fine state of preservation. Above this is a very different subject.

79. A terracotta statue of the Magdalen in hair robe and girdle, not of the best era of art.

80. The arms of the Buonvisi family (that friend of Sir Thomas More, whose bust we have mentioned) — a star and circle, — with a helmet over it and a half figure holding a scroll inscribed in old French: *Tout jour je pense*, an abbreviation of their full motto: *Tous les jours je pense à bien faire*. Above this is

81. A large head in marble probably Roman. On the side of the door

82. The bust in white marble of David Giustini, the late faithful and much lamented custode of the Castle of Vincigliata; he was an artistic stone cutter, and to his chisel with that of Marucelli we are indebted for nearly all the sculptural adornments of the Castle. Both this bust and that of Marucelli (n. 89) are the work of Dante Sodini, a Florentine, sculptor, who executed many of the marble statues for the

façade of the Duomo of Florence, among which is a "San Callisto," the head of which was modelled from Mr. Leader and is indeed a very good likeness. In the year 1889 Sodini received a gold medal at the Paris Exhibition for his statue of *Fides* (Faith). Behind this is

83. A slab covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics and a figure in flat relief of a man holding up his hands.

84. A shield with the device — a star and a circle. Above the door leading into the principal apartments is

85. A round in the style of Luca Della Robbia,— a Madonna in white, on a blue ground, with a border of varicoloured fruits.

86. The Pandolfini arms; *argent*, three dolphins *naiant*, *purpure*.

87. Shield in marble, arms, a lion carrying a bar.

88. Arms inscribed "Guccio Johannis" — two lions' paws.

89. Bust in white marble of Angiolo Marucelli, known as "Canapino," an artistic worker in stone and marble who assisted much in the sculptural restorations.

90. A marble tabernacle with two figures of the Madonna and St. John the Evangelist in *trecento* art. Round the frame is the inscription: *Sit cum prole pia lux nobis virgo Maria. Apocal* (C. V.) *a v l. sunt nobis*

*verba johanis.* Underneath is *Virgum conque sep FUS.* Near here are several armorial bearings in marble such as

91. A marble slab with a coat of arms — a *barry* of three, — it was an emblazonment that Hugh, the Duke of Tuscany who reigned before the famous Countess Matilda, gave to six of his barons.

92. A shield sculptured on a floral background, bearing the emblazon — a chevron and three scallop shells of the field. Beneath this

93. A shield. Device: a lion's paw.

94. The lion rampant of the Acciajuoli, forming part of an old frieze with acanthus leaves on the ground-work.

95. Shield, a *bend* charged with three crescents, with Gothic inscription: *S Herodi olim Cristofori di Jacobi pht.* Probably from the tomb of one of the Manetti.

96. Armorial bearings in marble, quarterings, Dexter lion rampant, Sinister a *barry* of four.

97. Large bas-relief in white marble, an heraldic composition, a dog with a helmeted head, over it a half figure of justice with the scales. An inscribed scroll encircles the figure, and underneath is the date: *1335. 9 Kalend Januarius* in Gothic letters.

98. A fragment of a sepulchral monument dated 1317, — bas-relief showing several figures weeping around

a deathbed. We have now reached the outer staircase which leads to the upper floor of the keep and whose base is guarded by a

99. Marzocco or Florentine lion, on an octagonal column, and bearing the Leader arms. There are armorial bearings also on the base of the column.  
1. Leader. 2. Alessandri. 3. Albizi. 4. Ceffini. On the wall of the staircase we find the following sculptures:

100. On the top of the stairs the Albizi arms with the motto: *Hoc etiam non sufficit.*

101. Coat of arms in marble; a bull rampant surrounded by fleurs-de-lys. Over it the inscription: *Piero di Francesco beccaio et suo*, probably from the tomb of a butcher named Piero.

102. Shield with the device — a dagger, a halberd, and a fleur-de-lys.

103. Monumental shield. — An eagle, with the motto *S Marci.*

104. A square of red granite with Egyptian hieroglyphics representing a king seated on his throne, and rows of bowmen on their knees before him.

105. Latin inscription: *L Julio L Pal Juliano.*

On the ground of the court are several objects of interest such as

106. A fragment of a pillar etc., from the ancient Castle of Vincigliata.

107. The debtor's stone. A wheel of six spokes in grey marble inlaid on white. This is the veritable stone which from the 15<sup>th</sup> century was placed in the centre of the Loggia del Mercato Nuovo in Florence, for the shame and punishment of debtors, and merchants who had failed dishonorably. The culprits were doomed to be "bumped" uncovered on this stone in the sight of all the market — a kind of moral punishment of the wheel which no doubt was as wholesome in its way as the torment of Ixion. Lippi (*Malmantile*, Chap. VI, v. 73) alludes to this original custom in the following lines :

Donne, che feron già per ambizione  
D'apparir gioiellate e luccicanti  
Dare il cul al marito in sul lastrone.

(The Florentine satirists were generally very hard on ladies' extravagance in dress.) The debtor's stone was replaced by a fac-simile when the pavement of the loggia was repaired, while the original preserved here was rejected as too much damaged for use.

108. Three square terracotta vases, in Roman style, adorned with moulded garlands and masks.

109. Two circular funereal ash chests in archaic workmanship in rough stone, with round covers.

110. Two similar ash chests, narrowing at the bottom, in the form of truncated inverted cones. All the

four came from Aquileia. High up in the wall of the keep over the second gallery, is

111. A relief in marble,— Madonna and Child.

We have still some inscriptions to examine in the quadrangle, but they are modern ones placed over the *sedia* of the loggia, where they form a kind of *Libro d'oro*, consisting of gilt lettered tablets recording the names of the Royalties who have visited and taken an interest in Vincigliata. They are in chronological order :

April 25<sup>th</sup> 1864. Prince Amedeo of Savoy, Duke of Aosta.

November 16<sup>th</sup> 1872. Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess Elena Paulovna of Russia.

June 18<sup>th</sup> 1874. Her Majesty Josephine, dowager Queen of Sweden and Norway.

November 7<sup>th</sup> 1874. Their Royal Highnesses Charles Alexander, reigning Grand Duke of Saxe Weimar, and the Grand Duchess Sophia with their daughters the Princesses Maria Alexandrina, and Elizabeth.

April 30<sup>th</sup> 1875. Prince Frederick William the hereditary Prince of the German Empire and his consort Victoria Princess Royal of Great Britain; with Humbert hereditary Prince of Italy, and his consort Margherita Princess of Savoy. A very interesting quartette who little foresaw, when all together here, what different fates awaited them as future reigning sovereigns.

March 31<sup>st</sup> 1876. His Royal Highness Prince Leopold of England.

March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1877. Their Majesties Don Pedro of Alcantara and Teresa Cristine Maria of Bourbon, Emperor and Empress of Brazil.

April 6<sup>th</sup> 1877. The Empress Eugenie and her son Prince Napoleon.

May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1880. Their Royal Highnesses the Count and Countess of Flanders.

May 5<sup>th</sup> 1881. H. R. H. Princess Victoria, of Germany.

Crossing the court again, we enter the Castle, by an iron door — the handles or knockers of which are works of art, and take the form of finely-cast grotesque figures,— and find ourselves in the guard-room. Before glancing at the arms however, we give way to our love of seeking after the unknown, and enter a tempting little lobby on the left of the entrance; here we find we have very properly taken the ecclesiastical portion before the military, for this leads us to

## THE CHAPEL

which is very devotional both in tone and colouring.

In the entrance is a relief in the style of Luca Della Robbia, — the subject, "Christ in the desert :" it is an upright figure holding a cross, the modelling has

all Luca's own grace and simplicity, the figure is in white on a blue ground.

The altar of the chapel is of Fiesole stone carved in early style, almost Lombardic in effect. It is a faithful copy of the altar beneath Cimabue's famous Madonna in the Rucellai chapel of Santa Maria Novella, and is supported on four fluted columns at the corners, and a cluster of four in the centre. They have carved capitals, on one of which are some angels' heads with the legend *Ave Maria gratia plena*. The altar is dedicated to the "Annunciation" and above it is a beautiful glazed sculpture of the "Annunciation," of the Della Robbia school, which was brought from the church of Monte Domini, where it was once placed behind the high altar. The Madonna robed in blue and red is seated, with a vase of lilies at her feet; the lily-bearing angel in white robes is kneeling before her, and the Holy Dove flying down from above where the Eternal Father is seen in a cloud.

The vase which holds the lilies has the arms of the *Da Somaia* family, the altarpiece was therefore a votive offering from one of the family in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, probably that Guccio Andrea Da Somaia, one of the Arte Calamala, who, together with Piero Rucellai, was Master of the Mint for six months, from November 28<sup>th</sup> 1429 to May 1430.

The window is also very interesting, being partly

of painted glass of the Renaissance era. The modern part is by Matteis of Florence, and with its ornate scrolls and shields forms a most harmonious setting to the really beautiful antique portions, viz: the four centre panes in medallion form, which are veritable *cinquecento* work. The upper one is a "St. Sebastian" said to have been designed by Pollaiuoli; the second represents the parable of the "Prodigal Son;" the third the "Marriage of the Virgin," — this pane has a little half circle with figures of Adam and Eve painted beneath the principal subject, and forming the keynote to it; — the fourth, is "Christ disputing with the Doctors."

All these four subjects are in the same style and evidently of the same date as the windows of the Certosa and Laurentian Library in Florence, and like those were probably the work of the monks of the convent of San Giusto alle Mura, which once stood outside the Porta a Pinti. The art of enamel painting on glass windows, instead of the older art of mosaicing bits of stained glass to form the figures, originated in this convent, where the monks had a regular laboratory with furnaces to melt the enamel colours. A document in the Archives mentions two monks *Goro* and *Bernard* as painting some windows in the "Popolo" of Santa Reparata. The best artists of Florence drew designs for them.

We will now turn to the smaller adornments of the chapel and beginning on the right of the door, note:

1. A holy water font in Urbino ware; under a canopy held up by angels, all in very high relief, there is a painting of the "Salutation;" and beneath it the heraldic device of the first possessor.

2. A triangular relief in bronze,—a copy in smaller size of Passaglia's white-marble sculpture in the tympanum of the arch of the door of the Duomo. It represents "the Madonna enthroned" with the lamb beneath, and emblematical figures on each side. This copy was made by Rossignoli in 1887.

3. A beautiful "Ciborium" sculptured in white marble by Stagio Stagi of Pietrasanta, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is in the form of a deeply vaulted arch with rich cornice, and two angels kneeling beneath it.

4. A large painting of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Sienese school, representing San Bernardino of Siena, a full length figure in white robes, holding in one hand a book open at the words *Manifestavi nomen tuum hominibus et ecce nunc ad te veniam*. With the other hand he shows a tablet bearing the sacred monogram I. H. S. surrounded by rays of light. St. Bernardino always preached with one of these tablets in his hand, and it is said that a man who made dice and playing cards complained to the Saint that his preaching had ruined his trade. "Make tablets like mine instead of your dice

and they shall be bought by many," said the Saint; the man did so and as the worship of the monogram was much in vogue, the tablets were looked on as amulets, possessing a peculiar sanctity. In most of the ancient houses of this time a stone sculptured with the monogram and rays was inserted in the building.

5. A Madonna sculptured in stone, a long proportioned figure in not the best style of art. It was found in a well in Borgo alla Croce. In the corner by the altar is

6. A pastoral staff in metal, a copy of the famous one by Benvenuto Cellini; the handle is covered with reliefs in scenes from the life of San Lorenzo. Enamelled on the staff are the arms of the Medici family who restored the church of San Lorenzo in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Pope Leo X gave the staff. On the altar are

7. A Crucifix in brass of the epoch of the 16<sup>th</sup> cent. and

8. Fourteen candlesticks, of which two are antiques from the convent of Vallombrosa, two others have the letters S M T F on them. The other ten are modern copies of an ancient shape, with the Leader arms in coloured enamel on the stand. On the right of the altar stands

9. A finely forged iron candelabrum five feet high.

10. On the wall near the window is a medallion in majolica representing Sant' Antonio, and on the other side another round representing

11. Santa Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi. On the wall opposite the altar is

12. A fine copy in bronze, admirably executed by Emilio Ercolani, of the "Miracle of San Zenobio restoring a dead child to life" from the tomb of the Saint in the Duomo by Ghiberti. Over this

13. A Madonna and Child,—early Florentine school — with gold background.

14. An octagonal holy water font of *trecento* sculpture, placed on a sculptured column. In one panel of the antique basin are the arms of the "Arte della Lana," in another an angel playing a very wide round-shaped viol, on one is a seraph, and in another an angel plays the bagpipes or rather the ancient "sampogna" which is said to have been the father of the organ.

15. There is a fine hanging lamp in open brass work over this and in the centre a

16. Chandelier in beaten iron, partly gilded, a copy of the old style by Contri da Settignano. Coming out of the chapel we find ourselves in the

## GUARD-ROOM.

The juxtaposition of the two different places is very suggestive, not only of the Church militant, but of medieval life and customs. A knight in olden times

rarely undertook an emprise without appealing to the aid of either the Virgin of miracles or of his Patron Saint; just as his very knighthood began by baptism, and a vigil in the church, so every deed of arms was begun by prayer in the Castle chapel, after which he stepped into the armoury to arm for the fray.

The guard-room is a large two vaulted room, serious and sombre as befits its warlike uses. The two small square windows are placed high in the wall. In the vault are the arms of many good old Florentine knights. Such as the Alberti, the Soderini,—to which family the Gonfaloniere Piero Soderini belonged;—the Buondelmonte, those ancient “brigands of the mountains,” one of whom was the faithless lover who caused all the Guelph and Ghibelline wars;—the Buoni, their relations who lived in the plain;—the Cavalcanti, one of whom, Guido, was Dante’s friend;—the dei Vinci, dei Cambi, and the dei Tanaglie, all families connected by marriage with the Alessandri who for so many centuries possessed the Castle.

The guard-room is surrounded with

1. *Sedili* in dark wood, and here we can imagine the squires and pages seated and talking of the coming strife, and boasting of victory before-hand, while waiting till their Lords enter to be armed. Some would probably cluster round the fire in the

2. Large brazier in Venetian brass work which came from Constantinople, while the light from the

3. Two iron candelabra suspended from the roof would fall in glinting rays on their steel corselets. The candelabra of olden days have been faithfully reproduced in these iron hoops, with their hooks and branches by Contri of Settignano. There are also

4. Six chairs in the style of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in carved wood, with the Leader arms, and

5. Two antique black arm-chairs with leathern backs embossed in gilding.

6. A table of black wood on lyre-shaped tressels,—a favourite shape in Italy in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

7. An octagonal table beautifully inlaid in coloured wood.

The weapons are arranged on rests round the walls above the *sedili*. On the left side beginning from the door are

8. Seven halberds of the shape known in the 13<sup>th</sup> century as *guisarme* or *gisarme*, and which is distinguished from the ordinary halberd by a spike on the back of the blade. There were glaive-gisarmes with sabre-like blades, and bill-gisarmes with a bill-hook blade.

9. Two javelins or spears, one with a flat blade about a foot a half long, on long handle, the other smaller.

10. A light cross-bow, with iron mountings.
11. A *laccio* or forked weapon, on a long pole. These leashes were, in the wars of the Italian mercenaries, used to take prisoners, by catching their neck in the fork, and then binding them with cords. This simple method explains the immense number of prisoners that were taken in those battles; we read that Hawkwood's men sometimes made as many as a thousand prisoners in an engagement. N. 33 is a more complete instrument of the same kind.
12. An iron army-lantern mounted on a long pole, for use in night marches.
13. A two-edged sword.
14. A flint-lock gun of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- On the long side of the room the arms in the rack are
15. Thirteen halberds of various shapes.
16. Four halberds of the same form, with blades in open worked steel.
17. Five javelins, one with spurs beneath the blade.
18. A curiously shaped *bill-gisarme*, or bill-hook shaped halberd with various spurs.
19. A long iron weapon, like a plain mace, which, with a shake, sends out three four-edged blades,—a sort of surprise javelin.
20. A massive iron sword to fasten on a pole to cut the ropes of the scaling ladders in a siege.
21. Seven rapiers, some with beautifully worked

hilts in perforated steel, others with more primitive guards of twisted wires.

22. Nine swords with iron hilts.
23. Two battle axes, one very small.
24. Two maces with plain, iron blades.
25. A curious mace with eight crescent shaped blades, cut in the form of faces. A formidable weapon.
26. A pair of hollow-headed pincers to make cannon balls with.
27. Long arbalist to fix into a loop-hole.
28. Hand cross-bow, in light wood. Although cross-bows are quite remnants of antiquity as weapons, they are still used at the *feste* at Borgo San Sepolcro.
29. On the wall above the arms, there hangs a very interesting tournament shield in carved wood, painted and gilded, which bears the Albizi arms, and may have been used in one of the many "Giostre" or tournaments held in Florence in the days of the Republic.

On the third side the rack contains:

30. Three rapiers, one of which has no guard to the hilt.
31. A large sword single edged, with iron handle.
32. Five halberds of different kinds.
33. A leash, or fork to take prisoners of war (see n. 11); this one is furnished with springs on each prong of the fork which so close in the neck that the prisoner,

once caught, cannot release himself without strangulation. This was one of the weapons used by the soldiers of the hated Duke of Athens. In one corner is

34. A pair of stocks for confining the feet and arms, and in the other

35. A similar punishment which might be called a *collar* for *choleric* shrews, for the blocks of wood are made to confine the neck and arms of two quarrelsome women who would thus be compelled to sit opposite each other with hands uplifted against each other yet powerless to strike. Verily our forefathers were adepts in the art on which an ancient treatise was written : "Ye Arte of Ingeniouslie Tormentynge." On the wall above these is

36. A Florentine painting of the *quattrocento* school. A Madonna and Child with St. Catherine and angels, on a gilt background.

The fourth side of the guard-room is occupied with body armour, such as

37. A page's suit of armour for a boy, consisting of a corselet with gorget and thigh-pieces, gauntlets and greaves all in beautifully chased plate mail, style of 15<sup>th</sup> century; in the centre of the cuirass is the Guelph eagle and on the gauntlets a lion.

38. Knight's armour complete, of the same style as the last, finely chased all over. There is a circular

shield with the *Biscia* or Viper of the Visconti of Milan engraved on it.

39. A suit of "tegulated" armour formed of narrow plates of iron riveted together. It has a helmet with a visor in form of a grating; the style would mark it as of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It was made for a gigantic man more than six feet high.

On some shelves in the centre is a collection of pieces of armour.

40. A Spanish morion of heavy iron with engraved embellishment. It is raised to a point in front.

41. Two helmets with ear pieces in the ancient Roman form.

42. A steel morion of the shape called "pots" in the time of Charles I.

43. A huge plain steel helmet, for a gigantic warrior.

44. Medieval helmet, — Saxon form.

45. Helm with closed visor and a neck piece, possibly used for tournaments.

46. *Trecento* helmet with grated visor.

Below these on two shelves are

47. Eight breast plates of black steel such as were worn by the corps of "Giovanni delle Bande Nere" in the time of the Medici.

48. Two cuirasses formed of steel plates.

49. Several chains and manacles for prisoners of war.

50. A very heavy iron collar for a criminal.

51. Near here are two ancient spingardes of great length, one of which has on it the arms in wrought iron of the Del Bufalo family. Near the door is

52. A suit of "regulated" armour, of iron plates overlapping one another, similar to n. 39, and close by it are

53. Two old lances, one of which is more than eight feet long and yet extremely light. In the middle ages such lances were used in warfare and in knightly combats, but in the Florentine Giostre of the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> centuries they were only used in the "Jousts of the Ring" or the "Saracen's head." These tournaments were generally held at Peretola near Florence on the Prato road, and no expense was spared to make them magnificent. The Florentine cavaliers spent unheard-of sums in the gold embroidered velvet housings for their steeds, and in artistic armour for themselves. With these Giostre ended the last revival of chivalry in Florence, so we may fitly leave the guard-room and pass on into one of the most interesting rooms in the Castle.

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## THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

This should rather be called the shrine of the Florentine St. Bernard, for the walls are covered with those beautiful frescoes illustrating the life of San Bernardo degli Uberti, which were painted by Spinello Aretino for the nuns of Santa Maria della Scala in 1398. On the roof are portraits of the Countess Matilda of Tuscany; San Giovanni Gualberto, the knightly founder of the order of Vallombrosa; and the Popes Urban II, and Pascal II, all of whom were connected with the life of the Saint.

*Sedili* of carved Spanish chesnut surround the room on three sides, and before them is a richly carved and massive table from a convent in Siena and some carved chairs with the Leader arms. How did the frescoes come to be in Vincigliata? The window will, literally speaking, throw a light on the subject, for behind its chesnut shutter is an inscription which being translated tells us :

" These scenes representing the deeds of St. Bernard of the Uberti, which were painted in the 14<sup>th</sup> century upon the walls of a chapel formerly existing in the ancient hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, now the monastery of San Martino, in the city of Florence, were, by a new artistic method, brought hither to adorn this

Castle at the charge of the English gentleman John Temple-Leader, who wished to preserve in this abode of the ancient Lords of Tuscany the memory of a man who held authority in the courts of Pope Urban II, Pascal II, and the Countess Matilda."

Another and more ancient inscription, reproduced from the church for which they were painted, gives us the history of their origin. It is to this effect :

" In this chapel is painted all the history of St. Bernard of the Uberti of Florence, from the beginning of his conversion to the many miracles which he performed after his life was ended. The which St. Bernard was a monk and Abbot of San Salvi, and then Father and Abbot of *Valembrosa* (Vallombrosa) and of all the order; and then was made cardinal, and then bishop of Parma, and was canonized by the Holy Church; and his *fête* is the fourth day of December, and the said chapel was caused to be made by Messer Bernardo de . . . . . in MCCCLXXXVIII."

Messer Bernardo of the illegible name could certainly not have chosen a better artist to illustrate the life of his saintly namesake, than Spinello Aretino, whose pure outline and delicate harmonious coloring are to be recognized in every figure. This Saint must not be confounded with St. Bernard of Clairvaux whose life this same Spinello Aretino painted in the Pieve of his native town Arezzo; but was a medieval Floren-

tine ecclesiastic, of the family to which Farinata degli Uberti belonged,—that stern old Ghibelline who could even stand against his own party to save Florence from destruction in 1260. Bernard was born early in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and was son of Bruno and Aldobranda of the Aldobrandi, herself, the sister of a *beato* Pietro Igneo. He took monastic vows at Vallombrosa, rose in the order till he was by Pope Urban II created Cardinal in 1097 under the title of San Crisogono. He next became Legate not only to this Pope, but to Pascal II who sent him to Lombardy against the heretics and schismatics. Having reduced the northern cities to obedience, he was in 1106 elected Bishop of Parma, and an extremely zealous prelate he made, for he excommunicated King Conrad, took Brescello, drew Parma away from her alliance with the Emperor Henry IV, and went to meet Lothair at Venice. All this energy and power brought him the favour of Countess Matilda, who seems to have placed him next to Pope Hildebrand in her esteem, for she largely endowed the monasteries of his order, and obtained privileges for him from the Emperor Henry V. A document exists recording a donation of the Countess to the Abbey of Nonantola in 1102, where beneath her seal he has written: *Ego Bernardus dictus Cardinalis presbyter S. R. E. et D. Pape Paschalis II P. P. Longobardie partibus legatus atque Vicarius dictante justitia e utraque parte.*

After his death he was canonized, and his successor Lanfranc had his body placed in a leaden coffin and buried under the confessional in Parma cathedral, whence in 1548 it was removed to its present position under the altar.

The Florentines so venerated his memory that they consecrated a chapel to him in the Palazzo Vecchio, but in the civil wars, the Guelphs being in power, exiled the Ghibelline Saint as well as the other Uberti, and dedicated the chapel to the more widely known St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

So much for the Saint; the frescoes in the Council Chamber which illustrate his life, are in two rows of "scenes" filling the three walls above the *sedili*.

Beginning from the left as we enter the room from the guard-room we have in the short wall by the door:

1. Bernardo degli Uberti re-inforces the people of Parma when the Cremonese army is occupying their fortress.
2. Bernard consecrated Bishop of Parma by Pope Pascal II. The drapery in this is extremely dignified.
3. Entrance into Parma as Pope's Legate.
4. Two miracles: *a*) A priest, released from prison on the intercession of the Saint, presents his offering on the tomb of St. Bernard; *b*) A man saved in a dangerous fall.
5. This is only a part of a scene representing horses

and some people in supplication. It probably refers to the legend that St. Bernard had once driven back the river Po which had overflowed.

In the whole length wall :

6. St. Bernard preaching against the heretics.
7. The heretics arrest St. Bernard in the Cathedral of Parma and throw him into prison.
8. A young man released from the possession of a demon at the tomb of the Saint.
9. A girl healed of a mortal disease.
10. *a*) A man praying at the tomb of St. Bernard, and *b*) a woman who opens a door which is badly guarded by two sleeping soldiers ; it possibly refers to the liberation of the Saint when imprisoned by Conrad's soldiers, in revenge for having excommunicated that king.

11, 12, 13 and 14. Figures of four Apostles.

Third wall as far as window :

15 and 16. Fragments of frescoes in which the figure of San Giovanni Gualberto (founder of his order) appears. It may refer to the legend that when Cardinal Bernard was in want of money San Giovanni Gualberto appeared in a vision promising him assistance, and in a short time two youths brought him money from an anonymous donor.

17. St. Bernard dispensing charity.
18. The Emperor Lothair kneeling to do homage to Bernard as Papal Legate at Verona.

The fourth wall between two doors

19. Has five figures of Apostles and the arms of the Uberti.

There are many interesting objects in the room:

1. Large carved table resting on very solid tressels formed of grotesque heads and claws; it was brought from a monastery at Siena. On it are .

2. A large casket in "scorched" work, the figures relieved by a punched groundwork. Subject: scrolls and mythological figures.

3. Another casket also large, in *cinquecento intarsia* as fine as Indian mosaic, in three colours: ebony, walnut wood, and ivory.

4. Upright casket with outer drawers at top and bottom; it is of rosewood inlaid with geometrical figures in ivory.

5. Another casket beautifully inlaid with coloured wood and mother of pearl; the design is composed of scrolls, mingled with tulips and other flowers, and the Medici arms in the centre.

6. Two noble arm-chairs stand near the table; they were brought from the house of Galileo, and are of his time; they are covered in red leather richly embossed with gold and ornamented by large nails.

Against the wall between two doors there is

7. A large wedding chest of gilded wood, the front composed of three panels finely painted in the style

of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The subjects are scenes from the life of a royal knight, probably taken from the legends of Charlemagne and the Paladins.

In the first scene, a king and queen are going out on horseback, the queen with a falcon on her hand. A huntsman with a dog is following them out of a castle much too small for him. There is another castle on a neighbouring hill which strongly suggests the situation of Vincigliata and its hereditary foe, the neighbouring fortress of Castel di Poggio.

The second panel represents the same royal couple: the lady has drawn up her steed and waits in the distance, the king has dismounted and appears to be releasing three distressed damsels from a cave. The same two castles are in the background.

The third panel shows the pair looking on at a combat between two knights, who fight on foot with long spears. The queen is still holding her falcon on her wrist. The paintings are as finely finished as the works of Pier di Cosimo, but shew a much earlier style of drawing.

8. A fine carved *cassapanca* (long seat with a back), in 15<sup>th</sup> century style, over which is a

9. Large Crucifix painted on wood, in the style of Cimabue or Margaritone.

From here a beautiful door carved in wood by Vincenzo Morelli leads us to the

## RECEPTION ROOM.

The arch of the doorway is sculptured by Giustini; the subject of the relief in the lunette is the Lord of Vincigliata dedicating the Castle to the Virgin.

The windows are large, and glazed in lead-bound circlets, alternated with heraldic devices in coloured glass.

The walls are diapered in fresco, the diamonds alternately filled with crosses, lions, and stags. The vaulted roof is blue with golden stars, and in the spaces are the armorial bearings of the families who have intermarried with the Alessandri, such as the Riccardi, the Rucellai, the Usimbardi, — former possessors of Vincigliata; — and the Tosinghi, who once possessed a wondrous palace in the old market of Florence, the façade of which was covered with little Lombard arches like the tower of Pisa.

The great arm-chairs are gilded, and covered with crimson brocade; all the other furniture would come under the head of works of art — for instance the very first thing to the left of the door is an old *armoire* of the 16<sup>th</sup> century carved and glazed. In it a perfect museum.

1. On the half shelf on the top, six ancient Pharmacy jars: one lettered, the others painted.

2. A jug in antique Faience.
3. Curious square inkstand with the Medici arms.
4. A salt cellar of majolica — rococo style — a queen carrying a dish.
5. Another salt cellar, same style — a woman seated at a table, which is hollowed to hold the salt.
6. A curious vase with grotesque head beneath the lip; it is painted in scrolls, and shaped like an inverted cone.
7. Salt cellar — female figure in 17<sup>th</sup> century costume, and turned up hat — holding a deep bowl.

On the upper shelf:

8. A square inkstand in majolica, at one end a female bust with a yellow scarf.
9. White majolica bottle with armorial bearings painted on it — three fleurs-de-lys and a crown.
10. Tall Delft vase with cover, blue and white.
- 11 and 12. Two fragments of Roman sculpture — women's heads both veiled.
13. Fluted china coffee pot (style, French, of the 17<sup>th</sup> century), the handle and bowl painted with flowers and butterflies, a head forms the spout.
14. Large Etrusco-Greek amphora with two handles and cover, painted with red figures on black ground, later Vulci style. Subject: two tall male figures, one of whom carries a sling, and a small one in the middle; they all have the very long limbs and the proportions

which mark the transition from Etruscan to Greek style.

15. Small Etruscan *patera*, in black Chiusi ware.
16. Small Etruscan "aryballos" or perfume vase, with one handle and small neck.
17. Porcelain coffee pot (French style of 17<sup>th</sup> century) painted with flowers on a white ground.
18. Small *coppa* with two handles, red Etruscan ware from Nola.
19. Archaic ointment vase, of red clay, bottle shaped.
20. Two tall vases of Delft ware, different shapes.
21. Wine goblet of old Murano glass.  
On the half shelf below these is an
22. Early christian casket of wood in form of a house, painted with saints on a red ground.
23. Mother of pearl scallop-shell such as pilgrims used. It is engraved in early 14<sup>th</sup> century style. Subject: the "death of the Madonna."
24. An ancient cylindrical padlock.
25. Small triptych, early style of painting, about A. D. 1400. In the centre panel are the Madonna and child Jesus, on the left Anna and Joachim, on the right St. Paul and St. Barbara, — the background is gold.
26. Two small Egyptian idols.
27. Ancient model of a mummy.
28. Six Etruscan idols or Lares. Lares were gene-

rally hung up around the inner hearth of an Etruscan dwelling and were supposed to be its guardians.

29. Nine small Etruscan bronze vases for domestic use, also several fragments of bronze utensils, which were found on Mr. Leader's estate at the Doccia, on the Fiesole hill, and are remnants of the Etruscan city which was the mother of Florence.

On the second large shelf we find

30. A casket, dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century ; it is of wood inlaid in Byzantine mosaic, and round the sides is a frieze of figures representing a marriage.

31. A beautifully shaped Etruscan vase (*Prochous*) in Chiusi ware, the bowl is adorned with a pattern in *sgraffito* (scratched into the wet clay), the high neck is narrow at the base and widens out into a cup shape. The handle and rim have little raised projections.

32. Another Chiusi vase (*Stamnos*) in form of a melon, on a stand. It has two handles.

33. Two pairs of ancient scissors beautifully chased and ornamented.

34. Fine relief in ivory, Herodias with the head of St. John the Baptist.

35. Ivory triptych ; in the centre is a relief of the Resurrection, on the sides are the four Evangelists, two in each wing.

36. A little Etruscan drinking cup in black ware

from Chiusi; the form is that of the *Cyathus*, a flat cup with a tall handle raised much above it.

37. An octagon formed of panels of carved ivory mounted on ebony. In the centre a prophet and two biblical figures, all round are Roman pagan subjects; they seem to have belonged to different caskets.

38. "Theseus and the Minotaur" in the very finest carved ivory, on an ebony base (a miniature gem of 15<sup>th</sup> century work).

39. Beautiful relief in ivory (14<sup>th</sup> century) of the Madonna and Child, with St. Catherine and three other saints, most graceful in figure and drapery.

40. Small triptych in ivory, set in a framework of pointed gables in wood inlaid with ivory.

41. Ivory relief, Madonna enthroned in clouds, with an angel worshipping her.

42. Charming ivory statuette of Madonna and Child, 15<sup>th</sup> century.

43. Ivory statuette of St. Sebastian; the modelling is curiously heavy and expressionless.

44. Ancient casket of wood with metal plates, on which are some minute figures in stucco. Subject: a Roman triumph.

45. Ivory powder-flask, on which, in rich relief, are carved, men with guns, a hare and a dog, mingled with thick scrolls and foliage. It has the Medici arms and

crown, with another heraldic *device*, a bend and star in chief.

46. Two small Etruscan lamps in terracotta. One has a handle.

47. A perforated majolica bowl containing fragments of Etruscan and Roman objects in bone found in the Fiesole tombs. Here are hairpins, styli, whorls, portions of a "subulo" or double flute etc.

48. Large iron key, antique and solid.

49. Splendid ivory powder-flask or hunting horn; 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  feet long, richly carved in geometrical designs in Indian style.

50. Etruscan two-handled cup (*cantharus*) with figures painted in black, on a whitish ground.

51. Little Etruscan "aryballos" or ointment vase in Chiusi ware.

52. Two pairs of ancient snuffers.

We now reach the lower shelf across which is lying a

53. Walking stick with the head wonderfully carved into a representation of a Baron seated in an arm-chair, with the Guelphic arms on the base. It looks like amber, but is in the same wood as the stick.

54. Large majolica vase with three handles and cover. It has three medallions with heads, on a blue ground; the body of the vase is painted with scrolls and foliage, in yellow, white, and blue. The coloring

and metallic lustre would seem to mark it as a specimen of early Caffaggiolo manufacture.

55. Fragment of a Roman statue. A hand holding the "discus."

56. A Shield and crown in bronze gilt. It appears to have been a bracket for holding a lamp attached to the wall.

57. One of the stone cannon balls which were fired against the tower of San Miniato, when Michael Angelo defended it, in the siege of Florence by the Prince of Orange in 1527. It was brought from San Miniato by signor Liverati, a painter, and by him given to Seymour Kirkup Esq., the Englishman who discovered Giotto's portrait of Dante in the Bargello. He presented it to Mr. Leader on March 17<sup>th</sup> 1871.

58. Head of Olympian Jove. Roman sculpture in marble.

59. Two Etruscan bronze *specchi* or mirrors; they are too much oxydised for the inscriptions, if there were any, to be perceived.

60. An Etruscan bronze bowl, much broken.

61. Some *Armille* and other fragments of Etruscan bronze objects.

62. A most interesting jewel casket in Gothic style. It is carved with figures in relief in wood, the figures painted, the box gilded. The figures which form the frieze round the side of the box represent the cere-

monies of conferring knighthood as they were performed in the middle ages. The new cavalier is seen entering the font as in baptism, then he is being armed, then he goes on his first emprise, and comes home to kneel at his lady's feet. On the cover in carved Gothic letters are the words: *Io sono chontento, da poch' amore m' a punto e vinto.*

And round the key hole: *Non aprire se d'amore non hai sentire.*

63. Three dome-shaped reliquary boxes covered in embossed leather of minute work, with the sacred monogram I. H. S. on the covers.

64. A larger box similarly shaped with the Acciajuoli lion on the cover.

65. Long box in compartments for crayons and pencils, covered with the same fine work in leather.

66. Very rich, and large casket, rococo style, in ebony, covered with raised foliage in *ormolu*, and fruit of all kinds cut in precious stones, such as lapislazuli, cornelian, onyx, jasper, sardonyx, etc.

67. Profile head in mixed ivory and wax (the face being modelled in wax). Possibly one of the Grand Dukes, as he wears a long wig, lace lappets and cuffs, and the cross of the order of St. Stephen.

68. Here is a little geology, to vary the art and archæology,—some fine crystals of white Arragonite (very hard carbonate of lime) from the Vincigliata hill, and

69. Some crystals of Barytes.
70. Three Etruscan glass lacrimatories beautifully oxydised.
71. An "étui" in fine red leather.
72. An ancient casket covered in red leather, gilded and bound with clamps of iron, which has been gilt. It bears the armorial device of a goat rampant.
73. A very small casket, silvered and with gilded clamps.
74. Curious old quadrant with four magnets in the flat plate.

Near this cabinet stands

75. A grand wedding chest of wood, carved and gilded. The diaper pattern which covers the front and side panels has the Acciajuoli lion rampant in relief in each diamond. On the sides the Acciajuoli and Alessandri arms are emblazoned in color.
76. A massive "credenza" of carved black wood. The columns at the sides are twisted, they support a frieze of grotesque head and scrolls across the top. The centre column is composed of several statuettes one over the other.

On the upper shelf of this are

77. Four fruit dishes in perforated majolica with raised heads at the ends.
78. Four similar dishes, but of a flatter form.

79. Salt cellar of majolica. Three syrens holding up a bowl.

80. On the second shelf are two fruit dishes on stands, with plates beneath them, similar to the ones above.

81. A flower vase, same style.

82. Two vegetable dishes in majolica painted with flowers; in appearance they have a French style.

83. Two vases, "Urbino," one with a snake handle.

On the third shelf are

84. Half a dozen cups and saucers in red and white china, red cocks on a white ground. One of them has a maker's mark A. J. cut in the clay before glazing.

85. A milk jug, style of the French pottery of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

86. A two-handled glass bowl, engraved.

87. Two bottles, similar work, in pyramidal form with screw stoppers.

88. Four smaller bottles with gilt rims.

The fourth shelf contains

89. A beautiful two-handled mug of Wedgwood's "cameo" porcelain; white figures on blue ground, a copy of the famous Portland Vase in the British Museum. The subject is "Theseus and Ariadne," the modelling of the figures and purity of design are exquisite.

90. Two old Murano vases with double handles.

91. Two fine old Venetian glasses, "light as air."
92. A blue glass goblet, anciently in the Salviati family, bought from their heir Ugo Ricasoli.

93. A two-handled bottle.

94. Six tall Venetian goblets with the Medici balls engraved on them, which came from Palazzo Pitti.

On the under shelf:

95. A claret jug with metal cover of old Bohemian glass, moulded and engraved.

96. Bottle with stopper, similar work.

97. A bowl.

98. A bowl in perforated majolica with a shield painted in the centre.—emblazoned with a cross, charged with nine crescents.

99. A plate of white majolica with painted arms; quarterings a lion, and a crescent.

100. Unique goblet in ancient glass, a foot high. It was found in fragments in some excavations at Vada in the Maremma district, Mr. Leader being present on the occasion. It is extremely interesting as one of the very few specimens of Etrusco-Greek engraved glass. The intagli, which are roughly cut, represent the Bœotian Atalanta running the race with Hippomanes, and in the rim are incised in Greek letters ATLANTE ΙΙΙΠΟΜΕΝ<sup>ο</sup>. The now decaying town of Vada was once the site of Vada Volaterræ,—an eminent Etruscan port connected with Volterra.

101. A white majolica dish with a fluted edge and the Acciajuoli arms in the centre.
102. Plain white plate, emblazoned,—shield argent, a barry of six, azure.
103. Large crystal goblet without stand, it has a gilt edge and is engraved with a dragon, the arms of the Arnaldi, an ancient noble Venetian family connected by marriage with the present possessor of the Castle. One of the Arnaldi family, which originally came from Vicenza, was beheaded by the tyrant Eccellino.
104. Two plain glass bottles with handles.
105. Two cut glass bottles with long necks and flattened bowls.
106. A bottle in fluted glass.
107. Eighteenth century cruet stand, cut glass and gilded.
108. On the other side of the cabinet is another of the Albizi family wedding chests, similar in style to number 76. The front panel is covered with fleurs-de-lys, carved in relief on the surface, and gilded. The Albizi arms are emblazoned on one side.
109. At the end of the room is a fine *sedia*, with raised *dais*, and high carved back. It came from the convent of Santa Maria Novella, and above this throne-like seat is hung
110. A medallion portrait of Queen Victoria, in white marble, by the sculptor Dante Sodini. It is a

memorial of the visit of her Majesty to Vincigliata during her stay in Florence in 1888.

111. Between the windows is another wedding *casone*, or large chest, in gilded wood with painted panels, representing in very mediocre art the story of Lucretia — and "false Sextus" the artist not having confidence in his art has written over it, ROMA-LUCRETIA: a very interesting antique.

Above this is

112. A mask of Brunellesco, cast from his features after death.

We will pass now by another sculptured door with the Anjou arms on the architrave, and a figure of St. George in the lunette, into the

## BED-CHAMBER

where we find Renaissance Art in a more domestic form. Here is

1. A chest of drawers in carved wood; the side columns are caryatides supporting statues of nude male figures. Projecting heads, beautifully carved, form the handles, and in the lock are little genii surrounding a head. On this is placed

2. A flower vase with three tiers of spouts in Faience, behind which hangs

3. A large mirror with carved ebony frame, *cinquecento* work.
4. A *cassa* which once belonged to the Medici family; it is carved in walnut wood to represent basket work; with the Medici arms in relief on the front.
5. A painting of the school of Filippo Lippi: the "Kings of the East worshipping the infant Saviour;" the Madonna is one of the most graceful figures.
6. On the same wall is a portrait by Subterman, of one of the Mannelli family dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He is drawn with a lace collar and cuffs, and a full crimson robe,—the hair and beard are in the style of Vandyke.
7. Chest of drawers in the same style as n. 1. The corner columns are formed of seated figures and Cupids, the handles are children riding dolphins, the locks are brass mounted. The room contains besides
8. Four gilded arm-chairs, covered with yellow satin, with a rich scroll pattern *appliquéd* in crimson velvet. Work of the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century. The chairs belonged to the family d' Elci of Siena. Before the window stands
9. A toilette table and mirror, finely carved in walnut wood by Frullini of Florence. In the tympanum of the door leading to the dressing room is
10. A relief of triangular form in marble representing St. John Baptist carrying a lamb, and on the wall

near it a beautiful Madonna and Child, a bas-relief in white marble by Bastianini; his last and unfinished work. The frame is richly carved in wood.

11. A priedieu, of *cinquecento* style, carved in wood by Frullini, stands by the bed; and above it

12. An exquisite painting of the school of Francia; a Madonna, with the holy Infant at her breast, is seated with the young St. John dressed in skins, leaning on her knee, while St. Lawrence and St. Stephen in deacon's robes, stand on each side. The painting is extremely rich in colouring and finished like a miniature, the limbs of the children beautifully rounded. The antique "rococo" frame is carved and gilded.

13. The bedstead, carved in wood by Frullini, is a magnificent imitation of *cinquecento* style. The Rica-soli arms are sculptured on the back and two statuettes of angels guard the foot. The "baldacchino" (tester), cornice, and claws are all rich in carving. The coverlet is of the same antique needle-work as the chairs; a crimson velvet scroll on a yellow satin ground.

14. A cushion in red satin with raised needle-work in gold, and the Albizi arms in the centre; is placed before

15. Another carved priedieu by Frullini, and above it on the wall near the door by which we have entered hangs

16. An ivory carving in a frame: "Christ's entry into Jerusalem," and

17. A holy water "pila" in majolica. Subject: Madonna and angels.

18. In the corridor leading to the court, and in the lavatory which is parallel to it are several framed parchments, the genealogical trees of famous Tuscan families. Here is the combined genealogy of Count Ugo or Hugh, and his descendant the Countess Matilda of Canossa, the ruler of Tuscany in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. She was the successful opposer of the Emperor Henry V who twice invaded Italy, the friend of Pope Gregory VII, and the builder of many churches. She made a vow to build 1000 churches, and in reality founded several hundred, some of which are still left in country and mountain villages.

19. Genealogical trees of the Albizi, two different branches.

20. Tree of the Albizi-Alessandri, the branch who were possessors of Vincigliata.

21. Tree of the Fioravanti of Pistoia.

22. Also one of the Capponi of Avignon.

23. Five carved chairs with high backs.

From this passage we find ourselves again on the loggia having made the round of the Castle, but instead of re-entering the quadrangle we will descend the inner staircase, which leads to the rooms below.

In a niche in the staircase is the stone statuette of a nun, and a beautiful iron lamp on a bracket covered with foliage in beaten iron.

The first room we enter is

### THE REFECTIONARY.

A room, 37 feet in length, with vaulted roof and two large windows barred without, and shuttered within, in true fortress style; they are glazed with the lead-bound circlets of medieval times,—not perhaps conducive to light, but withal very characteristic, and when in the afternoon hours the warm sunlight penetrates them, it sombrely illumines a very noble room. The walls and ceiling are frescoed in panelling with the armorial bearings of many of the historical Florentine families who have been connected with Vincigliata. On the wall by the entrance, the double red Eagle of the Guelphic party spreads its wings victoriously over the Ghibelline dragon; with the following inscription :

*Purpureæque aquilæ victricia signa sacerdos  
Donavit Clemens guelphis, viridemque draconem  
Quem rostro et pedibus victrix evisceret aves.*

On the opposite wall are the Papal Cross keys, and the golden lilies of Anjou, while the lunettes of the

vaulting contain a whole heraldic history of Florence. A female figure supports the Peruzzi arms with the family motto *Du super datum est*, which, however well it might have fitted them in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, before they were involved in the great Bardi failure, has since been slightly ironical.

The arms of the *Bardi* themselves are significant with their motto: *Non scherzare con l' orso — se non vuoi esser morso* (Do not play with the bear unless you wish to be bitten). There are the Nasi and Acciajuoli arms, with religious mottos, and the lion and tower of the Ricasoli with their expressive *Cum bonis bonus — Cum perversis perversus*, which, if not exactly Christian, is very natural.

The refectory is furnished in baronial style with a great table which fills the length of the room in the centre, and is supported on a series of massive tressels of carved and polished wood, with grotesque and heavy claws. On this are three branch candlesticks of medieval style, in beaten iron and gilding; they are all of different foliated designs, and are from the forge of that artistic metal-smith Contri of Settignano.

The two great candelabra with hoops and garlands which hang from the ceiling are by the same artist, who is in his way quite a modern Niccolò Caparra.

The room is furnished with four great *cinquecento* arm-chairs in carved wood and red leather, such as

were reserved for the use of the Lord and Lady of the Castle in ancient times, and two black oak chairs of *trecento* era with high carved backs, besides twenty-four cross-legged chairs, covered in buff leather embossed in the back with the Leader arms. There are also two other tables of *cinquecento* style on scroll tressels, and the artistic adornments of the room are as follows. Over the door is placed

1. The head of a stag, the royal gift of King Victor Emmanuel, by whom it was shot at San Rossore. By the wall

2. A wedding chest of carved wood standing on claws. The corners are adorned with grotesque figures, the centre panel in front has the Alessandri arms, a two-headed lamb, and the two other panels have reliefs of sea monsters.

3. A beautifully illuminated parchment, in the fine style of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, entitled in Latin "Seven laws of health (*Septem leges sanitatis*)," all very good old maxims.

4. Busts of Ugo and Gemma degli Alessandri (1400) in painted terracotta by Cartei.

5. A bronze medallion in a carved "rococo" frame. Profile head of John Temple-Leader, the present possessor of Vincigliata, by David D'Angers, a celebrated French sculptor who was also an ardent republican, and represented Paris in the *Assemblée Constituante* of 1848.

6. A carved wood *cassa* or chest dated 1500, once belonging to the Ricasoli family, whose arms, a lion, tower, and fleur-de-lys, are carved on the centre panel. The other two panels have grotesques and foliage, with a comic mask at each corner.

7. A large painting (5 yards 12 inches in length) of the last Supper by Santi di Tito, which we learn from the inscription was painted by him for the refectory of the monastery of Monte Domini, whence Mr. Leader purchased it. It is a picture mellow in colouring, full of expression, and interesting from the arrangement of the figures, which differs from other "Cenacoli," in two of the disciples being placed on the outer side of the table, a distinction usually given to Judas alone. He is here only marked by the absence of the sacred *nimbus* which encircles all the other heads.

8. A Byzantine painting in form of a Gothic arch. It is on a gold background, and represents St. Nicholas of Myra (or Bari) in episcopal robes, with the three golden balls in his hand, emblematical of the purses he gave the nobleman of Panthea, for his three destitute daughters; and over it in the lunette is St. Elizabeth of Hungary with her apron full of roses.

9. At the end of the room opposite the door stands a richly carved "credenza;" the columns at the corner are composed of three full-length statues, one over the other, with grotesque heads below.

On the top of the "credenza" are

10. Two kneeling angels, of the school of Della Robbia, holding candlesticks.

11. Four cylindrical vases of yellow Faience.

On the upper shelf:

12. A large ewer, in blue and yellow majolica, early Pesaro style (about 1400), covered with painted leaves and with several heads projecting from the surface.

13. Two modern vases by Cantagalli.

14. Three antique metal salvers embossed.

15. Fine ewer shaped painted vase (*vaso alla Rebecca*) of Urbino majolica, *cinquecento* era. Subject: a bishop and two saints.

On the second shelf:

16. Four ancient vases from the Pharmacy of the order of St. Stephen, bearing the cross of the order.

17. Interesting and curious group in majolica of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A lady, dressed in Medici style, is wooing Apollo (a nude male figure seated beside her) and has taken away his lyre. Probably a compliment to some poetess of the period.

18. Cantagalli vase. Copy of one from the ancient Certosa Pharmacy.

19. Two plates, French, 18<sup>th</sup> century, flowers and red scrolls on a white porcelain.

20. A fluted bowl. Pesaro, 15<sup>th</sup> century,—design in blue and yellow.

21. Antique Pharmacy vase for holding " scabious."
22. Group in antique white porcelain. Two young fauns holding the Guelphic arms, a double eagle.

On the lower shelf:

23. Modern Cantagalli plate, with comic head painted on it.
24. Similar one, head of Garibaldi.
25. Similar one, head of Dante.
26. Beautiful antique Faience plate, with a head of the Madonna and the inscription *S. Maria ora pro nobis*.
27. Very large circular dish 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  feet in diameter, of green and gold Faience, or early Pesaro ware, coarse and curious.
28. Plate on which is painted the head of a girl with long yellow braids of hair crossed on her chest
29. Two perforated dishes of white antique majolica with the Alessandri arms painted in the centre.
30. Fluted bowl on a stand, blue and white majolica with the armorial bearings of a Cardinal.
31. Dish of fruit imitated in majolica.
32. Antique ewer, a design in blue and white.

On the wall to the left of the " credenza " hangs

33. An arch shaped Byzantine picture similar to the St. Nicholas n. 8, representing the *Ecce Homo*, with a Madonna enthroned above.
34. Ancient mirror with carved ebony frame touched with gilding.

35. Large chest slightly carved.
36. A plate of majolica with a glaze imitating antique marble ; curiously light ware.

In the passage leading out of the refectory is

37. A head of a boy in marble, and
38. A brass lamp of Moorish form.

We now enter the

#### ANTE ROOM.

A square room vaulted with brick, the vaults painted with escutcheons ; it is furnished with a large cupboard and several carved chairs with the Leader arms, and two tables on tressels in form of a lyre, style of 15<sup>th</sup> century. The room is full of interesting objects such as :

1. A very curious casket finely inlaid in coloured wood and ivory mosaic, in the style of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is furnished with many inner drawers and shelves, all covered with "intarsia," and inside the lid are sculptured the emblems of the crucifixion. It probably belonged to an abbess.
2. Large "Ali Baba" jar (*orcio*) in coarse Faience with two handles ; the whole surface is covered with a design of vineleaves in green.
3. On a table near the window stands a large oval

basin on claws, with a beautiful Etruscan-shaped brass pitcher.

4. A curious round metal box with four inner compartments, on the covers of which are the respective letters N. P. G. R. On the outer cover of the box are enamelled the arms of the city of Pistoia, with the inscription *Doganieri* beneath them. It was probably the money box used by the custom-house officers at the city gates in a past century.

5. Ancient horn lantern; the top has a shield with the Salviati arms.

6. On the wall is a 14<sup>th</sup> century painting of St. Paul with his sword and book, and

7. A similar one representing St. Christine with the arrows in her neck. Over the window are

8. Two embossed brass plates.

9. By the door leading into the kitchen stands a magnificent escritoir in carved walnut wood. The corner columns have full-length figures of warriors, above grotesque caryatides. The panels are adorned with heads of Medusa in relief. On this are

10. Five old lanterns of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in iron work with fluted moveable tops, and

11. Another lantern of the date A.D. 1400, ornamented with little raised disks bearing the emblematical dolphins of the Pandolfini family.

12. In the corner is a fine majolica oil jar with the Medici arms painted in front.
13. A clock, date 1600. The works are beautifully made in chased brass, set in a tall wooden case.
14. On the wall is a Madonna and Child with two saints of the Byzantine school of about A. D. 1200, and on the table beneath it
15. A fine oval brass basin with the Medici arms, and
16. An Etruscan-shaped brass pitcher with a dragon for spout; both these came from the Palazzo Pitti.

From the ceiling hangs

17. An hexagon lantern in blue and white glass framed in polished iron work. Copy of antique.

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## THE KITCHEN

is large and vaulted with brick. The fireplace, which is copied from the one in the Castle of the Strozzi-Volpe, is raised, and has recessed chimney-corners on each side. It is built of brick and stone; the front of it is of castellated form, with a brick turret on each side; the central arch is supported on two sculptured heads, and the Leader arms are carved in front. The large iron dogs and accessories are quite in medieval style. If the fireplace is a castle, the sink is suggestive

of a Gothic church; the back of the immense stone trough being a recess, in the form of a Gothic arch, picked out with sculptured grey stone.

The kitchen is furnished with dark wooden shelves running round the walls on all sides, and richly filled with antique majolica plates and dishes, besides many interesting works in metal. We can count forty-two plates in quaint old Montelupo ware. On consulting the work on majolica by Drury Fortnum F. S. A. we learn that the pottery of Montelupo — a little town near Empoli — is "distinguished (or we should rather say notorious) for having produced the ugliest and most inferior painted pieces that bear the signature of their maker, and the place where they were made." The kitchen plates at Vincigliata perfectly answer to this, and their signature proves their identity. Yet though the men in armour and horsemen etc. on them are not fine works of art, they are with their yellow background very effective on the dark shelves, and emphasize the chronology of the room very perfectly.

Besides these characteristic plates we have

1. An ancient brass well-bucket (*secchia*), with lions' claws for feet, and a finely wrought handle, trefoil shape.
2. Two blue and white pharmacy vases are on the window-sill, and between them
3. A curious old pepper-mill, of the 13<sup>th</sup> century,

formed of one circular fluted stone turning within another. On the sides are grotesque heads; hanging near is

4. An iron hand-lamp in shape of a flat iron, with a handle at the wide end.

5. Iron hook for hanging meat, in form of two circles with hooks depending from them. On the upper shelf between the windows are

6. Seven antique drug vases of different shapes, and in the centre of the wall

7. A splendid plate of Castel Durante ware. Probably dating from about 1525, when the famous manufactory was at its best period. The subject is a Crucifixion with two angels above. The rim is floriated.

Above the window is

8. An embossed brass plate, and hanging on the wall near

9. A large copper warming pan with a perforated design on the cover, of leaves encircling a grotesque head.

10. A German warming pan with a quaint inscription punched on it, giving instructions how to use it, and a warning not to burn the hands in the effort. The old German legend runs thus: "Das ist ein wermpfan genant werspravchen wil der nims in die rechte hant und tve nur wager hin und her far unso wert das pet-schan werden warm aber ir mist-

spravchen mit verstant damit ir evch nicht prent in die hant. Anno 1734." The late lamented Emperor Frederick of Prussia was so amused with this that he copied the inscription with his own hand, when he visited Vincigliata in 1875.

11. Four vases are on the shelf above this, and in the corner hangs

12. A finely wrought copper "secchia" beneath which is

13. A bronze mortar, embossed with lions' heads and foliage. The handles are in the form of dolphins; on the side are the arms of the Orsini — three bears; — it was brought from the Palazzo Pitti.

14. Pair of bellows in carved wood, Venetian style. Subject: a warrior in the centre, and satyrs and nymphs around. The nozzle is of wrought bronze, ending in a dog's head.

15. Ancient chopping table on four legs, with the old knives stuck into a cleft at one end of it. Above this

16. A brass ewer of graceful shape.

17. A bowl, of blue and white ware.

18. Another bowl of majolica, with flowers painted on it.

19. A fine circular majolica dish, moulded and painted.

20. Three small jars.

On the pillar above the fireplace are

21. Two large two-handled vases; one of them has a spout.

In the front of the fireplace:

22. A large ancient lamp in iron and horn, which was used in processions. It was copied in 1889 for Carlo Alessandro Grand Duke of Saxe Weimar.

23. A spit of the ancient model, with all its appurte- nances, is placed outside the left wall of the hearth, which the bar passes through. It was an ancient pos- session of the Salviati family in Mugello, and was bought from their heir Ugo Ricasoli.

On the shelves over the washing trough are the following objects:

On the upper shelf:

24. A fine painted majolica drug vase, of Urbino ware with dragon handles. Subject: St. John Baptist in the wilderness.

25. Another pharmacy vase, with the Durante arms in front,—a pale and three hogs of the field. The spout is formed of a head, and the inscription on it is *Syro di Lupoli* (Syrup of Hops).

26. A Raphaelesque plate, with fluted edge, and a cherub in the centre.

27. A plate,—mythological subject. Lion chasing some nymphs round a fountain.

On the middle shelf:

28. Brass urn with spout and three legs.

29. A white marble mortar, square outside, carved in relief; on three sides acanthus leaves, on the fourth a castle.

On the under shelf:

30. Ancient iron box with two iron compartments, for coffee or tea.

31. Two bronze mortars ornamented with lions' heads in relief.

In the corner hangs

32. A curious ancient conglomeration of iron hooks to grapple a bucket when it had fallen into a well.

33. A large majolica plate with the Salviati arms.

34. Three drug vases of divers shapes, and

35. A bread bin, such as was used in the Romagna.

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### THE BREAKFAST ROOM.

Is a square apartment next to the kitchen. The arms emblazoned on the arched roof are those of the Alessandri, Usimbardi and Leader. It is furnished in *cinquecento* style, with an octagonal table finely carved in wood, two consoles and several chairs with sloping backs, covered with buff leather, with the Leader arms embossed. There are several interesting objects here. On the left of the door near the window is

1. An ecclesiastical chair in carved walnut, and over it
2. A mirror framed in carved ebony, — style of A. D. 1600.
3. On the console, a curious Roman sculpture — a double head in white marble. Pomona on one side, and Bacchus on the other.
4. An ancient strong box, in red leather and iron, the handle is in the form of two dogs face to face.
5. Table linen press, of the 15<sup>th</sup> century ; it is a screw press the frame of which has Corinthian columns at the corners. The base is covered with reliefs representing rural scenes, with lions' heads at the corners. On the cross-bar that supports the screws is a frieze of male and female heads.
6. Two carved chairs with leather seats, — date 14<sup>th</sup> century.
7. Two similar chairs with gilded leather, — style rather later.
8. Sideboard carved with caryatides and grotesque heads. On it are
9. Five vases for flowers, one is antique, the others are copies ; they are of blue and white majolica with many spouts. In the corner of the room is
10. A large oil jar painted with the Medici arms, which formerly belonged to that family.
11. A chest of drawers, 17<sup>th</sup> century style, in finely carved wood, with brass mountings. On it stands

12. A very beautiful statuette, the work of Luca Della Robbia, representing himself in the costume of a peasant. The pose is simple and graceful, and the modelling pure enough to suggest Luca's own hand. The face is certainly the same type which we see in the portraits of the Robbia family painted by Andrea Del Sarto in the cloister of the SS. Annunziata, and is precisely the same face as the head of himself, which he sculptured on the door of the Sacristy of the Duomo.

13. Ancient 2 "braccia" measure (1 yard, 10 inches), dated 1779.

14. Antique seal, in the form of a vice, strongly made in iron. The impression is the arms of the Alessandri of Vincigliata.

15. An ancient lantern, the iron work covered with raised figures of flies and shells.

16. Another lantern, taller than this last, ornamented with female heads, and the Florentine *gigli*; this once belonged to the Bargello, and may have illuminated the footsteps of many a stern Podestà on his way to and from the Hall of Judgment.

17. On the wall above the table is a roundel with the device of a Cock and a Cross — the united arms of the Bigallo and Misericordia. It must have formed part of the decoration of the Loggia del Bigallo, in Florence, between the years 1425 and 1475, while the union of the two charitable companies was enforced

by the Signoria; an union which did not last long, as the objects of the companies were different, the Bigallo having hospices for Pilgrims, the Misericordia succouring the sick and dying. It was not till Cosimo the First's time that the Bigallo became exclusively a foundling hospital.

18. A clock in a tall case which strikes 24 hours in the day, according to the old Italian reckoning. The face is beautifully worked in brass with the night hours inlaid in darker metal. Date 15<sup>th</sup> cent. In the corner is

19. A large bronze mortar. The outside is adorned with the relief of a man spearing a bear, and the armorial bearing of a dog rampant; the handles are formed of women's heads and the rim has an inscription in raised Gothic letters: PIETRO DOISEMENT, FRANCese A PERUGIA MI FECE. ANNO Dom. MDCXXII, E R D R S ANGIOLI.

20. On an 18<sup>th</sup> century writing table are two bronze models of mortars for bombs.

21. Model of a long thin cannon of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

On the wall between the two doors:

22. A relief in marble of a Madonna and Child, a good copy of the school of Mino da Fiesole, in a stone niche.

23. A Byzantine painting of a bishop with his crozier.

24. The Bardi arms in a roundel with the three Leopards of England added; granted to the Bardi by

Edward III, very small consolation for the money lent (and lost) to that famous warrior and impecunious King. This completes the round of apartments on this floor, so we will again return to the quadrangle which is the starting point for everywhere.

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1<sup>ST</sup> GALLERY.

Ascending the lion-guarded open staircase, we reach the private apartments of Mr. Leader, which give on the balcony formed by the lower of the two Lombard galleries round the keep. On the third side of the quadrangle over the loggia, this becomes a wide terrace with two windows in the outer wall, giving a glorious view of the rock-bound hill of Monte Ceceri, and of the Val d'Arno Fiorentino in all its richness and glory, with its villa-studded green slopes, its olive plantations and vineyards, and the blue mountains which bound it. On the first side of the gallery are

1. A square of Venetian mosaic in a geometrical pattern.
2. An arch-shaped mosaic of the Madonna, in blue robe and green mantle.
3. A sculpture in white marble. Madonna and Child under a canopy upheld by angels. St. Bernard

and St. Francis stand in the side compartments. It is a beautiful work by one of the Pisani.

On the second side is

4. The front of the marble sepulchre of Pietro Strozzi. The inscription in the centre with the Strozzi and Pitti arms on either side is inlaid in marble mosaic. The former is

D. O. M.  
PETRUS STROZZA  
CAROLI F. SENATOR  
FLORENTINUS SEPUL  
CHRUM HOC SIBI POSTE  
RISQ. DECREVIT FILII  
PIENTISS. POS. ANNO  
SAL. M D C VII.

On the end of the terrace are the Piccolomini arms in marble, a cross charged with six crescents. And over the southern window the Leader arms in majolica.

The private apartments of the owner are similar in plan to those on the other floors. In the first room is a fine bust in terracotta, of the Countess Matilda of Tuscany. She wears a little embroidered cap, of a smaller form than that which Petrarch's Laura is represented as wearing, and also a fillet binding her hair; on her breast is a kind of shield with the device of a cross.

The second room has a large chimney-piece in

stone, on which are sculptured amid ornate foliage the arms of the Peruzzi family who once possessed it, — a lion rampant bearing a pear. It came from an old palace in Via della Vigna Vecchia, Florence. The back of the hearth is formed of a curious old relief in iron representing Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

In the lobby leading to the study is a beautiful stained glass window by Matteis. Subject: St. George; over the door is a lion rampant, and a Venetian glass chandelier hangs from the ceiling.

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## THE STUDY

forms quite a little museum of medieval objects. The window has ancient circular panes of glass ; and here, in a great arm-chair of gilded red leather, one might sit, looking down on Florence, lying in its valley far beneath, its domes and towers touched with sunshine, its sheltering hills clad in blue mist, and feel that one is transferred to the centuries that have gone by. The peasants ploughing with their white oxen beneath the faint shadows of the olives might be the selfsame figures which Giotto saw; the soldiers whose arms flash in the light as they march up the hill, might be the troops of John Hawkwood or Baglioni. Even within

the room there is nothing to bring us back to the present. We see

1. Four arm-chairs with gilded leather backs, which came from Galileo's house.

2. A beautiful fireplace sculptured in stone, with foliage and armorial bearings; such a chimney-piece as Benedetto di Maiano made for the bride of Borghini, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is lined with dark wood and on its shelf are

3. Several grotesques carved from gnarled knots of wood, turning the eccentricities of nature into eccentricities of art with great ingenuity.

If one looks closer, the present century is hinted at in

4. A fragment of wood which was part of a beam of York Cathedral, and inserted in it are a crucifix and medal made from the metal of one of its bells, which was melted at the time of the fire there in 1840. Beside the fireplace hangs

5. A rusty old coat of mail which again breaks the illusion by reminding us how long ago was the time when the knight of Vincigliata went out to fight. It must have been some centuries even since his descendants could have used the

6. Two antique flint-lock pistols, which hang near. They are beautifully chased and adorned with little medallion heads in relief. On the barrel of one is inscribed Lorenzo Comminaso, and on the other Giov. Antonio.

In the corner stands

7. A fine cassone in intarsia, one of the kind which was made for Matthias Corvinus King of Hungary by Benedetto da Maiano, before he began to work in stone, and which got spoilt in a disastrous voyage. It is lined with red velvet and gold brocade, and contains some musical treasures, such as

8. An antique zithern, with the sounding-board painted in wreaths of flowers, and a

9. Mandolin, beautifully inlaid with mother of pearl, signed *Vincentius Vinaccio fecit, Neapoli, sito nella Calata dello Spedaleotto A. D. 1780.* On the cassone stands

10. A curious old Dutch casket with several drawers of wood, covered with red leather, inlaid with figures of different coloured leathers, the outlines being gilded and the faces painted. It gives the story of Joseph, with that naïve ignoring of local colouring and chronology, which induced the Dutch artists to use their native costumes in all their religious paintings. Here Egyptians, Ishmaelites, and Hebrews, are all in the wide hose and broad hats of the Fleming of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This unique casket once belonged to Galileo himself, it having been given to him by a friend in Holland. It was bought by Mr. Leader at the Villa Galileo.

11. A very large cabinet carved in dark wood,

with columns, grotesques, etc. In it are a collection of ancient books, rare bindings, and

12. A very small spinet of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in ebony inlaid with ivory. On the cover are small Dutch figures in ancient costumes, and inside it is the inscription *JOANNES MAGGIUS ROMANUS INVENTOR*, a signature rather puzzling in connection with the evident Flemish workmanship. It may have been a Dutch copy of one of Maggi's spinets, and the honest Fleming gave the Italian the credit of his invention.

There are besides in this case

13. Several old books and some Persian book-covers.

14. An Indian dagger whose hilt is inlaid with gold. In this handle is a penknife and enclosed again in the handle of the knife a small steel point which was poisoned, and kept for the Rajah's false friends and secret enemies. This belonged to Mahahwassey, Rajah of Coorg. There is also an Indian weapon of another sort :

15. A skull-cracker carved in wood nearly as hard as iron, and

16. Louis XV's purse, embroidered with the arms of both King and Queen ; it was in this that Louis XV kept his *louis d'or* when he played cards with his courtiers in the evening. It was given to Mr. Leader by the Countess Passerini who had received it from a French lady, an *émigrée*.

17. A large carved *armoire* whose columns are composed of figures and masks; the panel beneath has a splendid scroll and the armorial device, a lily and a bar. It contains a great many interesting objects, among them we find

On the upper shelf:

18. A pair of very ancient slippers embroidered in green and gold, together with an old fan, which were given to Mr. Leader by the late Marchesa Riccardi-Strozzi, they having been in the Riccardi-Strozzi family for generations.

19. Statuette of St. Francis in dark stone.

20. Two angels in very old glazed majolica, seemingly fragments of candelabra.

21. Another fragment representing St. Christopher.

22. An *étui* of the last century, in light blue and silvered metal, given to Mr. Leader by the late Robert Liddel at Christ Church coll. Oxford.

23. A similar *étui* in gilt metal in the style of the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

On the second shelf:

24. A metal plate with the likeness of the unhappy Isabella Orsini embossed on it.

25. Several antique silver knives, forks, and spoons, with gilded handles richly *repoussé*s.

26. A pistol case and powder bag, in embossed leather.

27. A circular casket in the same style of work.
28. An ancient hour-glass.
29. A metal plate with a relief representing a sacrifice to an idol.
30. A glass plate with the Pucci arms painted on it.
31. An antique bronze inkstand ; on the dome shaped cover is a kneeling genius holding a torch. It is an inkstand that suggests "inspiration."
32. An old bell with the Medici arms.

On the third shelf:

33. A very curious old tankard, carved, — cover and hinge and all, from a single piece of beech-wood. It is the work of a Norwegian peasant, and has twelve archaic coloured figures of the Apostles round it, with a Gothic inscription, and the date 1359. It is a very interesting specimen of medieval Scandinavian art, and was bought by Mr. Leader from a peasant in the valley under Gausta Field and the Riuchan Foss (water-fall), in Norway.
34. Two gauntlets in steel and buff.
35. An Etruscan idol.
36. A Roman bronze Hercules.
37. Two Chinese figures.
38. A square *plaque* of majolica, with portrait of Pope Pius V.
39. Six ancient knives ; the handles are carved figures in ivory.

40. A glass lacrymatory, and a fragment of a bronze ring with a *scarab* in onyx, very much carbonized by the action of fire; found at Aquileia on August 30<sup>th</sup> 1879.

The lower shelf contains

41. A Venetian brass Gondola lantern, with glass sides.

42. An Egyptian idol.

43. The terrestrial and celestial globes, in brass, engraved, — very interesting scientific instruments of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

44. A gilt-headed bamboo walking cane, which was used by the great uncle of the present owner of Vincigliata.

45. An old dagger finely chased.

46. A brass candelabrum, a page holding a branch.

47. Some battledores in crimson velvet and gold, which belonged to Palazzo Pitti, and with which the ladies of the Court of the Grand Duke Ferdinand III played; the cypher F. III is still legible on them.

At the side of the *armoire* stands an ebony cabinet of six drawers, ornamented in rococo style with gold leaves and sprays riveted on, and with fruit of *pietre dure*.

The table which is of carved black wood has on it

48. Two brass candlesticks with grotesque figures for claws, and

49. A statuette in majolica of the Madonna of Loretto. Beneath her is written *Virgo Lauretana*.

Opening out from the library is a lavatory, which contains

50. An ancient marble *pila* or font, an octagon shaped basin on a column, with an inscription in Gothic letters, and in the entrance which opens on the wide terrace, a Madonna in marble.

We now ascend the second flight of stairs in the court to the upper outer gallery, which leads us to another floor of similar plan to the former ones. The rooms are not regularly furnished, but they have a good many treasures in them notwithstanding. Here is a whole collection of wedding chests or *cassoni*, that might have contained the *trousseaux* of half the 16<sup>th</sup> century brides of Florence. Most of them are inlaid in coloured wood, in Raphaelesque scrolls; some more ancient ones are carved. One has the name and armorial bearings of Maria Jacometti Ceroni, another has the tower of the Torrigiani on its shield, and others have various devices.

There is a portrait of Loysius *Princeps Card. Estensis* and two Madonnas, one in terracotta, the other in marble, in the style of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, besides a painting of a Madonna and Child in a curious half oriental style of dress, such as Jacopo Bellini might have painted when he came back from the East. Also some Byzantine Madonnas with their gold backgrounds and stiff figures.

Here is a curious iron arrangement of winch, cogs, and wheels with cannon balls hanging about it, that is very suggestive of the age of besieged castles. It is however only a turn-spit.

There is now nothing to explore above us but the tower, the narrow spiral of which we begin to ascend. Even here we find works of art. A majolica *plaque* painted in "Gubbio" style, representing the miracle of San Gallicano, meets our eyes at one turn; and at another the arms of Santa Maria Maggiore, and a sculptured saint, which formerly held the alms box of a hospital.

The first chamber in the tower has on its walls the Leader arms, and an inscription commemorating the restoration of the Castle by Mr. Leader, in A. D. 1862.

The chamber above this is dedicated to the Al-bizi-Alessandri, and under their arms are Verino's verses

*Albitios fama est Arrheti ex urbe profectos  
Stemmate diviso genus Allexandria proles  
Traxit, et ex uno profluxit uterque parente:  
Utraque nobilitas clara est belloque togaque.*

This room contains an interesting bell, with the inscription in Gothic letters FRANCISCUS PUCCI FLOREN-TINUS ME FECIT A. D. MCCCLII — XPS VINCIT, XPS RE-GNAT, XPS IMPERAT.

The highest room has a window from which is appended the iron cage in which prisoners were kept. An awful punishment, when the Italian sun beat on their heads, or the icy mountain blasts blew cold on winter nights. The cage is copied from the one at Piacenza.

The last spiral staircase is a hanging one, of solid stone, suspended from the roof by iron clamps forming the keystone of the vault. Ascending this we reach the summit of the tower, and see all Val d'Arno spread beneath us; and Florence looks like a crystallization of buildings, the thousands of villas and villages seeming like atoms being attracted towards it, in the basin formed by the many blue hills, which make beautiful undulations on the horizon. Looking over the battlements we trace the ramparts, turrets, and roofs of the Castle, down to the shadowed arches of the cloister, eight stories below us; and realize not only what a great architectural work has been achieved in the restoration by Mr. Leader, but also what grand old fortress builders were the men in the medieval times who could plan such a mass of masonry, beautiful in all its parts, and as strong as it is beautiful. At once a dwelling place, a weapon of war, and a shrine of art.

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## THE GROUND FLOOR.

We have now seen all the rooms in the two principal floors, and will descend to the lower apartments, which are at present occupied by the *custode*. A flight of steps leads us down to a square antechamber, very dark, and with a high barred window, and vaulted roof. Here are

1. Four carved high-backed chairs.
2. A very interesting *trecento* painting, on gold ground, representing the "Madonna enthroned;" on one side of her stands St. Stephen and St. Dominic, on the other St. George and St. John Evangelist. It was evidently a votive picture; for the donor, in the form of a diminutive figure in black, is kneeling before the Madonna.
3. In the wall opposite the window is a fragment of marble with a shield bearing the device: three pyramids in chief, and the giglio of Florence in base, and, above it, a part of a Gothic inscription, in which the word *Arnolfi* is plainly legible. It is probably a sepulchral memorial of the family of "Arnolfo di Cambio," builder of the Duomo. A long passage leads us to the underground cellars at one end, and at the other to some fine vaulted rooms occupied by the *custode*. A corner of the wall of this passage is formed by a

stone from the ancient Castle, with the Alessandri arms on it. The passage conducts us also to the lower entrance of the Castle, a low pitched and frescoed archway, forming a porch to the entrance hall, in which is a fine lavatory in the 14<sup>th</sup> century style carved in stone; which together with the magnificent chimney-piece in the kitchen of the *custode*, was a remnant of the old Castle. Through the quaint porch of which I speak we enter

### THE CLOISTER,

which in its way is nearly as charming as the quadrangle. It is a portico running round a square piece of green grass like a small Campo Santo of Pisa; and in true old Florentine style, the wall of every arch is enriched by frescoes.

The arches are of the round Lombard form, and are supported on sixteen octagonal columns whose base is a low wall running round the square. The capitals, as Lombard capitals should do, show every variety of sculptured ornamentation. One has the evangelists' symbols, one four lions with the Leader arms, another four eagles with the Usimbardi arms. Above these are grotesque gargoyle.

In fact the form and meaning of *quattrocento* art

is perfectly reproduced by the clever chisel of David Giustini.

Shall we examine the frescoes or the archæological specimens first? — We will take the paintings on the walls, for they give the groundwork of the history of the Castle. They are the work of Cav. Gaetano Bianchi, one of the best imitators of ancient art in Florence.<sup>1</sup> These have none of the crudeness and harshness of modern fresco, but are as mellow as if they had been done for ages, and as simple in outline and naïve in design as though Giotto himself had drawn them.

On the wall to the left of the porch, we see Messer Ugolino di Aldobrandino de' Visdomini, Lord of Vincigliata, before marching with the Florentine army against the Sienese in 1257. He is represented as invoking the aid of the Virgin on the emprise. Messer Ugolino is fully armed, excepting the helmet and shield with the Visdomini device, which lie on the ground beside him, as he kneels before the Madonna, who is enthroned beneath a Gothic canopy, the steps of which are covered with a rich carpet. The drawing of the Madonna, and the Holy Babe holding a bird in his hand is very true and graceful.

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<sup>1</sup> Cav. Bianchi is the able restorer of the Giotto frescoes in Santa Croce and the Bargello, and has frescoed some rooms in the State Archives at Pisa, the Municipal Palace of Udine, and the Villa Demidoff at Florence.

To follow the frescoes in chronological order we must now cross over to the opposite side of the cloister and begin with the vicissitudes of Vincigliata. In the year 1363, that terrible Englishman Sir John Hawkwood, who had for some years been fighting for the Pisans, drew near Florence with his White Company. Of course this meant war with Florence, and on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1363, Hawkwood surprised the Florentine camp, and obliged the army to fly for refuge to the city. The walls were strong and well-defended, so that the White Company could only skirmish in the vicinity, but they revenged themselves by ruining the country as much as possible. The Brunelleschi family held Petraia against them so well that they retreated to harass the forts on the Fiesole and Montughi hills; and it was supposed to be in April that Hawkwood took the Castle of Vincigliata and partly destroyed it. The fresco represents this episode in two scenes; the legend beneath the first reads: *John Hawkwood with his English Company and the Pisans, marches to attack the Florentines*, and the second fresco represents the Company departing from Vincigliata with their spoils in May 1364. The men are carrying away sheep and cattle, prisoners and treasure, down the steep bare rocks on which the Castle stands. And yet this terrible enemy of Florence was destined in a few years from that time to become its honored champion, and on the whole a faithful one.

The fourth scene represents the restoration of the Castle by Alessandro and Bartolommeo Alessandri degli Albizi, some years after its damage by Hawkwood; while the third commemorates their change of name and arms. It was in 1372 that these same Albizi brothers, not agreeing with the family politics, cast off their party the *grandi*, and became *popolani*, calling themselves Alessandri, and taking as their ensign the two-headed lamb, instead of the circlets of the Albizi which are here being trodden under foot.

The wall at the lower end of the cloister is occupied by a large fresco representing the marriage of Bartolommeo Alessandri to Agnoletta di Bettino Riccasoli in 1381, — the first bride brought to the Castle after its restoration. In this fresco the costumes are very interesting, being perfectly authentic for the time. The bride is clad in a *zimarra* of royal purple, embroidered with pearls, and a headdress of gold cloth with pearls, from beneath which falls the short veil of silk gauze which marked a new-made bride. Her attendant wears the high turban which was affected by the fashionables about that time, and which came from the East, together with the fashion of gold embroideries and other extravagancies.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century artist has followed the example of his 15<sup>th</sup> century brethren, and put himself into the

fresco; — he is the spectator with dark complexion and grey moustaches wrapped in a "lucco." Between the frescoes are the armorial bearings of all the line of Lords of Vincigliata from the curious device of the Usimbardi — a monk holding an hour-glass — to the scallop-shells and lions' heads of the Leaders.

Over the door is a beautiful lunette by Luca Della Robbia, a "Resurrection" (figures in white on a blue ground). The Christ is rising from the tomb, only half the figure being visible; — this conventional representation of the mystery of the resurrection is especially frequent in the early Florentine masters of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The two Maries kneel by the tomb. Their figures, as well as the draping of their mantles, are extremely graceful. This beautiful lunette was originally in the "Ritiro Capponi" in Via San Gallo.

Sixteen Roman amphoræ from Aquileia are placed round the low parapet of the cloister, and in the centre of the grass plot stands a large sarcophagus in marble which is almost unique in interest, having served in different ages as the tomb of both a Pagan and a Christian.

It is of the oblong Roman form, and supported by two lions couched on a base. On the Pagan side the sculptures are slightly injured by time, as they count half a score more centuries than the other.

There are figures of tritons and other sea deities and the following inscription :

D. M.

CASCELLA APOL  
LONIA C FECIT C  
MAESTRI EDOXOM  
ET FILIE DVLCISSIONE  
LVCILLE VTRASQVE B  
ENEMERENTIBVS.

(To the manes of the Gods ! Apollonia Cascella erected this monument to Eudoxius Maestrio, and his most gentle daughter Lucilla, both most worthy.)

It appears that in the 14<sup>th</sup> century a certain Da Caprona of Pisa chose this sarcophagus for his own tomb, hallowing it to its new office by adding a front of Christian sculptures. Here in the centre of a row of Gothic arches is the same conventional resurrection as in La Robbia's lunette, but of a much ruder period of art. On the right are the Madonna, St. Paul, and Mary Magdalen ; on the left St. John the Evangelist, the angel of Peace, and a saint who might be either St. Raniero or Nicodemus, both of whom were especially venerated in Pisa in the middle ages.

Two Pisan crosses are sculptured at the ends, and

beneath the sarcophagus is the device (eagle and castle) of the "Domini Caprona," a noble family extinct in Pisa for ages.

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### THE CHURCH.

It is now time to explore a little outside the Castle. The iron door in the barbican gate opens into a country road, which, in a few hundred yards walk, brings us to the village church of Vincigliata, which is dedicated to Santa Maria and San Lorenzo. It stands picturesquely on an eminence surrounded by a group of houses, and it has a very ancient tower that, judging from its masonry, might almost date from the time of the Countess Matilda — that indefatigable builder of Tuscan churches. Indeed it has a documental pedigree almost to her epoch, for the "popolo" of Santa Maria a Vincigliata is mentioned in the book of Montaperti in the year 1260. There also exists that deed of 1318, by which the sons of Scarlatto cede their rights in its tithes to the new purchasers of the Castle, the Usimbardi (see page 9). In 1335 the Usimbardi family ceded the patronage to the Buonaccorsi, and on June 25<sup>th</sup> 1345 Vanni the heir of Buonaccorsi promised the rectory to Niccolò degli Albizi, in recompense for services rendered by this Niccolò to Simone Bu-

naccorsi grandfather of Vanni. This was the Niccolò who at the same time bought the Castle, and who, when ill of the plague in 1348, made a will leaving his *poderi* at Monte, in the parish of San Gervasio, to endow a hospital or a monastery, but which will was set aside by his sons Alessandro and Bartolommeo (see page 18). They thought it would be a better memorial of their father to restore the parish church, which was much out of repair, and obtained the sanction of the Vicar general of the Bishop of Florence, to appropriate the *podere* of Monte to that use.

The restoration seems to have been nearly a refabrication, for the arms of the Albizi and Alessandri are to be seen in keystone and cornerstone, over the whole church. An old document gives us the description of the church, as the Alessandri built it. It is an inventory made in 1790 by the prior Giovan Battista Fabbrini before he modernized the building; he says: "The church is 30 braccia long, and 13 wide (57  $\frac{1}{2}$  feet by 24 feet, 11 inches); it has only a nave and three doors, one for the sacristy in the choir, another near the tribune, the third being the principal entrance, and only one window with glass, and iron grating. The choir is behind the high altar in the East. It is square, with its dome *a cielo di carrozza* (probably a waggon vaulted roof)."

At present, it having been restored in 1790 by

this Fabbrini, it is a very ordinary country church, with little to mark its antiquity internally; except the arms of its first restorers, a niche in the choir for holy water, and a fine "lavabo" in the sacristy, both sculptured in the style of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

It contains also the tomb of Filippo Campani who was rector here in 1682, with its inscription cut in a slab of *macigno*.

There once existed a beautiful picture by Filippo Lippi, which was in the choir in the time of the Alessandri. Vasari says that "Messer Alessandro degli Alessandri, then a knight and friend of Lippi, caused him to paint for his country church at Vincigliata, on the Fiesole hill, a picture with S. Lorenzo and other saints (on the left SS. Cosimo and Damiano, on the right SS. Agostino and Antonio), with the portraits of himself and his children." When this picture adorned the choir, the altar had a "paliotto" with S. Lorenzo painted on gilded leather,—this was there in the time of the curate Vestri 1619, but his successor Bartoli replaced it with a "purgatory" painted in panel; on the altar were a large painted crucifix and smaller cross bound with threads of gold. Lippi's painting and the crucifix are all gone; the painting is preserved in the Alessandri palace and its place in the church filled with the inferior "Holy Family with San Lorenzo" which the curate Campani placed there

in 1682. There is also an old mediocre painting of the martyrdom of "Santa Cristina."

The sacristy contains a curious collection of relics. The names of a few are St. Donato, St. Tertullian, St. Vitale, St. Vincent, Emeritus the martyr, St. Placidus, etc. etc. The priest, who is a quaint and garrulous old churchman, tells a dreadful legend of one of his predecessors who was killed at the altar by Francesco Alessandri, which we have related (page 26).

We are anxious to ascend the tower, and inspect the bells which are said to have ancient inscriptions on them, but we find there is no internal staircase to the tower, so a primitive external ascent is made by the more courageous members of the party. A *contadino* is called to bring a ladder, which is drawn up on the roof of the *canonica* (priest's house) and being reared against the tower from that "bad eminence," is held by the man while the explorers ascend; but the legend of the bells is illegible, so we cannot tell their story.

The *canonica* is a long low villa of which "all the windows are doors," as a child once aptly remarked; they are fringed above with a vine, and open on a garden, full of oranges and lemons, of tomatos and grapes, with a fine fig tree or two. On the wall of the lower terrace is a very good bust of St. Lawrence in terracotta, early Florentine style. The church,

which was once dedicated to the Virgin and San Lorenzo, is now called San Lorenzo, its name having been changed by the 18<sup>th</sup> century restorer, the priest Giovan Battista Fabbrini, who also turned the choir in the opposite direction to its original situation.

Near the *canonica* is one of those picturesque roofed gateways so common in Italy, and the houses of Mr. Leader's peasants, who are just now engaged in cutting off the leaves and superfluous stalks of the vines, left so ragged after the grape harvest, and from this archway emerges our friend the wood-ranger with his gun slung over his shoulder. We join company with him, for he is to be our guide down to another church connected with Vincigliata, that of San Martino a Mensola. He takes us by a short cut plunging straight down the hill, and cutting off all the turns of the zig-zag carriage road.

We cross a little torrent, called the Trassinaia, and find ourselves in a gorge which might be in Norway, so wild is it. Lofty cliffs, crags and pine trees are all massed together on the sides of the rocky stream which goes plunging down between these natural walls till lost in a hazy dell at the bottom. Behind the crags we hear the ring of the stone cutters' hammers, and realize that not far from where we see a man working, was the quarry, now worked out, from which Brunellesco took the stone for his cupola.

At the foot of the descent we emerge from the pine-wood near a large and handsome villa which once belonged to the Alessandri, but now forms part of the estate of Mr. Leader, who purchased the villa from Conte Carlo Alessandri. It is the house to which that family retired when Vincigliata began to decay, or was no longer found suitable to household life, and is in the style of Italian villas, of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, with ample rooms and a charming long corridor; but it contains no other remains of antiquity except some *sedili* in the hall. From a balcony on the upper floor, may be seen a most beautiful view of the hills surrounding Florence. There is a south garden where lemons and myrtles bloom, and a north one where black cypresses overshadow the walls; and near this is the chapel, on the roof of which is a curiously arranged bell with an outer clapper. The Alessandri "lamb" is to be seen everywhere, on door and gate.

The altar of the chapel is of stone, and above it hangs a Madonna painted in the style of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, while on it is placed a beautiful crucifix of inlaid pearl and ivory; on the pearl panels are engravings of the Christ, the dove, and St. Francis beneath.

A little below this villa the Trassinaia joins the Mensola, and here is Mr. Leader's mill which looks as though it might have ground the Alessandri corn

for centuries past. At one side of the mill is a tower with arched windows, and on the other a grape vine climbs over the wide door of a wheelwright's shop.

We cross the bridge that spans the double stream and ascending a road through some vineyards reach the pillared porch of the pretty country church of San Martino a Mensola.

There has been a church in this spot ever since the 11<sup>th</sup> century when the Benedictine monastery close by was founded. After that epoch it fell into ruins, and was rebuilt about 1450 by Pope Nicholas V, in the time when St. Antonino was bishop of Florence.

It has a nave and two aisles; a great variety of armorial bearings are sculptured in the keystones of the arches, and capitals of columns, bearing witness to the dominion of many Florentine families. There is a treasure of art in this little church which is, I believe, quite unknown to the generality of visitors to Florence. First there is one of the finest of Fra Angelico's paintings, over the altar to the left of the choir; an Annunciation, with the most exquisitely painted Madonna and Angel. In the left corner of the picture he has added, as a supplementary subject, a small view of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, forming a keynote to the mystery of the birth of Christ.

Over the high altar is a large triptych of Gothic

form, with paintings of the school of Giotto. In the centre is a life-size Madonna and Child, with St. Julian, and St. Amerigo, and at the Virgin's feet a kneeling figure of the donor,—one of the Zati family, with the date "October MCCCLIII." In the right compartment full-length figures of SS. Martin, Gregory, and Anthony. In the left, Mary Magdalen, SS. Nicholas, and Catherine.

The Pietà contains the story of St. Martin dividing his cloak with the beggar, and the arms of the Zati-Velluti.

The altar on the left of the chancel has a painting, said to be either by Cennini or Orgagna. It is in three Gothic arches, containing respectively full-length figures of the Madonna and two saints; the tympanum of each arch is occupied by a half-length representation of a prophet, and over all is a frieze of angels.

In the centre of the *predella* is the conventional resurrection, with the patron Betti di Corbignano, and his wife kneeling at each side of the tomb.

The two altars in the aisles have also fine pictures, but one of them has been much injured by time.

The house close by the church is connected with the modern Vincigliata, as being the birthplace of Giuseppe Fancelli the architect; and not far from it is a *contadino's* house, once called "Villa Buon Ri-

poso" which belonged to Boccaccio's father and was by him sold in 1336. The poet Boccaccio has described the place in two or three of his works.

We now descend a little lane between two hedge-rows and reach the bridge over the Mensola, where we come down with a shock from past ages, and find that convenience of modern locomotion a tram-car, waiting to convey us to Florence.

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### THE SWIMMING BATH.

Out at the postern gate, and beneath the pine trees, we take our way under the guidance of the wood-ranger, who knows every turn and dell, in the vast pine-woods of Vincigliata. Down he plunges and we after him, in a kind of "follow my leader" procession, sliding down the slopes made slippery by generations of pine needles; now stumbling over the stones of an old mule road, then rounding a group of myrtles; down, down to a *contadino's* house, and farm yard, where a number of Ali Baba oil jars stand in a row near a heap of yellow Indian corn, on the *aja* or threshing-floor, and a black eyed *contadina* with a mummylike babe in her arms is leaning on the stone lintel of the door (for even this is built

in medieval style), and she gives us a smile, like a sunbeam.

Here we leave the Vincigliata *podere* and find ourselves at a turn of the road with another gate at right angles, which latter the wood-ranger proceeds to open by some mysterious process, with the aid of a secret tool found in a crevice of the wall, and we find ourselves in a more mysterious dimness, descending steeply among the dark cypresses which border a precipitous path winding round the rocks.

On the other side is a steep defile where grow cypresses, ilex, and myrtle, arbutus, and Spanish broom, with here and there a silvery mountain thistle, or starry mountain pink. Still down, down to a deep gorge where the Mensola (Boccaccio's Mensola) comes tumbling amidst its crags, and crossing over it on the bridge built by Mr. Leader, we reach the bank of a little green lake, beneath great crags of rock, that hang above it, jagged, ragged, and projecting; and rich in sombre tints of brown and grey.

This is the bath, and a more beautiful spot for a swim could scarcely be found.

Its solitude is almost overpowering, — nothing to break the silence but the ripple of the Mensola over its stones, the faint rustle of the wind in the pine-woods opposite, or the swish of a bird's wing as it flies in and out of its home in the great crags above. On one

side is a medieval looking tower built by Mr. Leader, with young pine plantations near it, and at its foot a grove of oleanders, whose red blossoms drop into the lake.

Here and there the ancient quarries from which stone has been taken ages ago, are formed into alcoves for diving platforms, for dressing-rooms, and rustic arbours by the water-side whose arches are covered with ivy. In the rock at the end of the lake is a shrine with a Madonna, in Della Robbia's style, above a vase of flowers, and at the other end a water garden where grow water-lilies, iris, papyrus, and high pampas grass; while a punt floats on the lake, so that timid swimmers may be reassured. In the dressing-room is another majolica Madonna.

Close by, Mr. Leader is building a little villa in the style of a Roman loggia, for bathers to have refreshment and repose. On the south side are woods stretching far up the hill, and terrace after terrace of great stone walls enriched with oleander, ivy, purple iris, and fringed with pines.

The bath is certainly ideal in beauty. But this is not all, for in this lovely hollow is contained a whole chapter of Florentine art history. Here came Giuliano di San Gallo and Benedetto da Maiano, who was bred among these quarries, to choose from this spot the stone for their architectural work. Michael

Angelo's plans for the Laurentian Library and the great stairs leading thereto, were put into stone hewn from this hollow, now filled with limpid water. From this quarry, called on that account "Cava delle Colonne," came the columns of San Lorenzo, Santo Spirito, and the choir of the SS. Annunziata. Some of the last public works for which this quarry yielded stone, were the restoration of the sacristy and Medici chapel in San Lorenzo in 1817, when the columns were taken from it. The stone cutters on that occasion were Antonio Bartolini and Francesco Materassi of Settignano, who each earned four francs a day. On this occasion a large piece of rock fell upon two workmen, one of whom, Bulli, died after a few days, and the other, whose name was Maiano, broke his leg.

The quarry was not used again till 1833, when the stone for the new staircase of Palazzo Pitti was taken from it, the chief cutter being Pietro Bartolini, probably a son of the Antonio, mentioned above, for offices are very often hereditary in Italy.

In fact this rocky basin has helped to make Florence, and is hallowed to art in the memory of the great artists who have handled and shaped its stones into works of beauty.

The stone is of various kinds, there is a very dark grey sandstone called by the workmen *pietra bigia*, and a pale bluish sandstone called *pietra serena*. These

have different textures in different parts, there is a rough stone which they call *ruspe*, that withstands exposure to atmospherical influence; and a finer grain called *pietra fine*, which is used for interiors and for sculpturesque decorations. There are some kinds almost as hard as granite, which are known as *forte*, and others soft and easy to work with the chisel, named *tenere*. The hard stone takes a polish almost as fine as marble. The *pietra bigia* being both hard and strong, is chosen for stairs in Florence, which modern ladies find as hard to ascend as did Dante in his day, and is that *macigno* spoken of by the same Dante when railing at his fellow citizens as

.... quell' ingrat' popolo maligno,  
Che discese di Fiesole ab antico,  
E tiene ancor del monte e del macigno.

" That ungrateful and malignant race  
Who in old times came down from Fiesole,  
Ay! and still smack of their rough mountain flint."

(CARY'S trans., *Inf.*, XV.)

The geological formation of the Vincigliata hill and Monte Ceceri is not by any means confined to the stones above mentioned. The Professor Guido Vimercati, C. E., in a learned article on "The hill of Vincigliata" in the *Rivista Scientifica Industriale*, speaks of several rare minerals to be found there especially pyrites, limonite, aragonite, and barytes, the crystals of

which are found in a layer of flaky clay (*argille scagliose*) which speaks of ancient volcanic action. Dr. Francesco Passerini has also written on "The minerals and rocks of Vincigliata," and in the third Congress of Italian Scientists held at Florence in 1841, Signor Vittorio Pecchioli presented numerous specimens, and a long list of minerals found on that hill.

The bath is at the very foot of Monte Ceceri, that mountain of stone which makes such an effective object as seen from Vincigliata. Here for the height of several hundred feet are layer upon layer of *macigno*, and *pietra serena* hewn into rugged hollows, and great quarries propped up by rough pillars of rock left by the quarrymen who have dug them out.

Excepting three quarries, all those on Monte Ceceri now belong to Mr. Leader. A winding path through the ascending terraces of shrubbery, and a grassy road beneath the grey olives on the hill, bring us at length into the dusty and deeply rutted road to them. Such a road! worn into deep hollows and ruts, and with pieces of the solid rock jutting up amidst them. Here we see the placid white oxen dragging the loads of stone, calmly ignoring the impediments in their way; and two poor little donkeys struggling under the same difficulties, and so fully alive to them, that it is only the cruel lash of the drivers, which keeps them up to the terrible strain.

Here we lose sight of the smiling vale of Arno and see stone, stone, and yet more stone, in every direction.

On the left, great yellow cliffs stand out into the landscape with a few silvery barked poplars, standing up against the blue sky with their roots in the rocky soil. On the right is a mountain towering above us formed of strata of grey and yellow rock alternated with layers of friable stone. The paths wind along the edges of precipices, and lead to vast caves which seem like grand primitive temples, for the wide galleries recede in ascending steps beneath the roughly hewn roofs, supported on massive columns of living rock, and one can go up the wide steps till almost lost in the distance. Like primitive temples these too have been the scenes of human sacrifice, for it often happens that a large piece of rock falls on some unfortunate or careless workman and crushes him. Our guide while telling us this, is urging us to pass quickly by the mouth of the quarry, for that is generally the dangerous spot.

Through all these fifty quarries the chief sounds are the boom of the blaster's powder, echoing suddenly, or the constant ring of the stone cutter's hammer; for no less than 500 workmen are employed on this hill. Fiesole has been poetically called the Mother of Florence; here one realizes that the idea is not wholly poetic, for during all the centuries that Flo-

rence has existed, the stones of Fiesole have formed it. The Etruscan walls, the Roman Theatre of Fiesole itself, the medieval fortresses and palaces, the churches, and modern houses of Florence, all had their birth from this inexhaustible hill, and not only the material part of Florence, but the soul of her art also arose from here.

The material which nature supplies, has always a great influence on the art of a country. The forests of Germany and Switzerland produce wood carvers; the alluvial clay on the plains of Lombardy brought forth the beautiful terracotta adorned architecture of the Lombard towns; and so Monte Ceceri remotely caused the rise of Florentine sculpture. There have been endless generations of stone cutters at Maiano and Settignano from the times when the Romans cut their friezes for the Theatre at Fiesole, and Arnolfo's men carved the stone for his buildings. And time after time has the artisan turned into the artist. Mino da Fiesole soon left the rough *macigno* and carved his Madonnas in the smoother marble; Desiderio di Settignano, Benedetto and Giuliano da Maiano learned that stone was a vehicle to express their artistic inspirations, by using the chisel in their father's workshops; and who knows whether the David of Michael Angelo would ever have been the pride of the Florentines, if the child had not passed his babyhood amidst the ring of the hammers in these quarries, and seen

the scrolls and angels emerge under his foster father's chisel.

So even a stone quarry has a history and artistic interest in this wonderful land which has embalmed the past.

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### " IL LIBRO D' ORO."

We might call this chapter "the ethics of a visitors' book." Now a "visitors' book" has many aspects : it may be to some a mere uninteresting list of unknown names, to others a vehicle to record enthusiasm, or complaint, and to indulge in that universal tendency to inscribe himself, which belongs to mankind in general. To others again a visitors' book is a page of history, or a precious collection of autographs ; this is more especially the case when the object visited is of an artistic or historical nature. Such a page of history is the Album of the Castle, in which one finds memorials of the Italian travels of Royalties and celebrities, and evidence of their taste and appreciation of art. There is a great deal of national, as well as private character to be learned from a visitors' list. Here we have the princely signature in one single word " Leopold " or " Beatrice ; " the free-and-easy Americans who sign " Belle Brooks " or " Kitty Rooke ; "

the unassuming Italian who always gives his Christian name and surname and nothing more; and the decorous English who may omit the familiar name, but never forget to write themselves as Miss or Mrs., Captain or Mr. N. or M.

Curious coincidences sometimes occur, for instance, it is strange that one of the very first entries in Vincigliata Album should be the "Conte Carlo degli Alessandri," a descendant of its ancient possessors.

A visitor interesting to the owner was Signor Luigi Bucalossi, an Italian by birth, who writes after his name "a British subject who voted for Mr. Leader at Westminster."

There is quite a remarkable collection of royal autographs which we will take in chronological order. The Duke of Aosta<sup>1</sup> heads the list with his aide-de-camp Captain Roberto Morra; they visited the Castle on April 24<sup>th</sup> 1864, before it was finished, and when the cloister was quite in a state of embryo, little more than the excavations having been made.

Some years later, on April 14<sup>th</sup> 1872, came Thérèse Princess of Hohenlohe, with Prince Frederick of Hohenlohe, and the Princess Catherine de Hohenzollern Sigmaringen; and soon afterwards the Grand Duchess

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<sup>1</sup> Just as this is going to press (January 1890) the sad news arrives of the death of the Duke of Aosta, a calamity in which the nation is in sympathy with its monarch's sorrow.

Hélène Paulovna of Russia — widow of the Grand Duke Michael, uncle of the Czar Alexander — and her lady in waiting, the Baroness de Raden. The Grand Duchess made the *custode* David Giustini (who was also the sculptor of much of the ornamentation) tell her the history and meaning of everything she saw. This was only a few months before her death in February 1873.

On November 7<sup>th</sup> 1874 the Grand Duke Charles Alexander of Saxe Weimar drove up to the Castle with the Grand Duchess Sophia and the Princesses Maria Alexandra (afterwards Princess of Reuss) and Elizabeth ; together with a large suite, the Conte Conestabile, Comm. Aurelio Gotti, and Cav. Campani,—three of the best historians of Florence acting as their *ciceroni*. The refectory was specially illuminated on the occasion, to the great admiration of the young Princesses. So literary a man as the Grand Duke, who, besides his royal and military titles, is also Rector of the University of Jena, would be sure to take an intelligent interest in such a work as this, besides, he was a judge of the restoration of medieval castles, having restored his great Castle of Wartburg. His pithy remark on the ancient bracket which Mr. Leader would retain in its old place in the loggia of the court in spite of the architect's inclinations (see page 33), shows how thoroughly he understood the subject. In a letter to Mr. Leader some little time later, he writes: "*Cinquecento* is a time, of

which we greatly admire the art, but it is a time in which we should have had slight pleasure in living."

Perhaps the most interesting Royal party inscribed in the Album was the *quartette* of Crown Princes and Princesses who with their suites visited Vincigliata on April 30<sup>th</sup> 1875.

A DI XXX APRILE MDCCCLXXV  
 GIOVANNI TEMPLE-LEADER  
 EBBE L'ONORE DI RICEVERE  
 IN QUESTA SUA VILLA DI MAIANO  
 FEDERIGO GUGLIELMO PRINCIPE EREDITARIO  
 DELL' IMPERO GERMANICO  
 COLLA CONSORTE VITTORIA  
 PRINCIPESSA REALE DELLA GRAN BRETAGNA  
 E  
 UMBERTO PRINCIPE EREDITARIO  
 DEL REGNO D' ITALIA  
 COLLA CONSORTE MARGHERITA  
 PRINCIPESSA DI SAVOIA.

Here are their signatures :

VICTORIA CROWN PRINCESS OF GERMANY AND PRUSSIA AND PRINCESS  
 ROYAL OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

MARGHERITA DI SAVOIA.

FRIEDRICH WILLHELM KRONPRINZ DES DEUTSCHEN REICHS UND  
 KRONPRINZ VON PREUSSEN.

UMBERTO DI SAVOIA.

They were then four gay young people, with all their monarchical honours and anxieties in prospect, and little dreaming that to one the crown would only be brought in the hands of death, and heralded with pain, and that to her who loved him, it would be that crown of grief — widowhood. Margherita and Umberto have had a brighter fulfilment, and have grown into the hearts of their people, by ruling not so much with the sceptre, as with the heart, and long may they reign. On that April day they were all full of spirit. When Col. Morra recalled having visited the Castle with Prince Amedeo, the Prince Humbert said jestingly: "You have risen in the world since then. You were captain and my brother's aide-de-camp, now you are colonel and aide-de-camp to the Hereditary Prince, and better than all — a member of Parliament." Prince Frederick of Prussia was particularly taken with the German warming pan, and the room rang with his laughter as he copied the inscription on it (see page 116-117), in his note book, which he used a good deal that day.

The Princesses signed their names standing, and with their gloves on, but Prince Frederick in his methodical manner, seated himself at his ease in an arm-chair, took off his gloves, and gave the ceremony quite the aspect of an affair of state. On their return to Berlin they did not forget Vincigliata, for Baron

Alfred von Reumont wrote to Mr. Leader on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1877: "A short time ago, our, and also your, Princess Royal talked to me of Vincigliata, where you received her, with the liveliest interest. The Princess spoke all the time in Italian, and I was happy to find she shares our predilection for Florence."

Her Royal Highness Princess Margherita now Queen of Italy also kept a pleasant memory of the day, for she desired the Marchese di Villamarina to express to Mr. Leader her sense of gratification in their reception there.

A party from Scandinavia! Josephine Beauharnais, Queen-mother of Sweden, with her Dame d'honneur and escort, spent one day in Florence on coming up from Rome, and employed it in driving to Vincigliata. The Queen, being connected with the Bonapartes, had a great sympathy for Italy, and being a good catholic the pretty little chapel pleased her more than anything else, she shook hands and congratulated Mrs. Leader on the possession of it. Her death took place shortly after this visit.

In March 1876 Prince Leopold of England arrived to see the Castle, which possessed a personal interest, as he had in 1860 passed some months in Mr. Leader's Villa at Cannes. Of course he was regaled with wine of the Vincigliata vintage, of which he so approved, that he would drink no other kind during his stay in Florence.

Now, come a party of grandees from the other hemisphere. Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Brazil, whose names are entered simply as

D. PEDRO D' ALCANTARA.

THERESE CHRISTINE MARIE.

They were accompanied by their suite, while Commendatore Gotti and Cavalier Persiani acted as *ciceroni*. It was in March 1877, and the wind blew especially keen, but the Emperor bore it like a stoic, saying he had known winds as cold on the Sierra Nevada. He enquired into everything and took notes in the most systematic manner. The Empress chatted with much sympathy on the subject of Tuscany, where her sister the Grand Duchess Maria Antonietta had reigned, but she became quite melancholy when Naples was named, for there her childhood had been passed while her father Francis I, of Bourbon, was still king. But even *her* memories of a lost kingdom were but slight compared to the sadness of the next royal personage who visited the Castle, i. e. the Ex-Empress Eugenie, who was accompanied by her son the Prince Imperial on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1877. Those simple names "Eugenie," "Napoleon" seem to make the page weep, so sad are the memories they bring of an Empress without a throne, a wife widowed, a mother bereaved, and a

young career which, in place of inheriting an Empire, began and ended with a treacherous death in a far-off land. On the day when mother and son were at the Castle together, the Prince in the exuberance of youth began to vie with the Marchese Raffaele Torrigiani and Marchese Roccajiovine, in gymnastic feats, and climbing in perilous places, till the Empress maternally chided him for alarming her. The Empress was especially pleased with the guard-room and told Mr. Leader it reminded her of a story of the tournament at Eglington Castle in 1839, in which Louis Napoleon took part. It seems that on the first day the lances were found to be too tough, and they hurt the champions, so for the next combat they were partly sawn across, but this, as far as artistic effect was concerned, was an unlucky inspiration, for the weakened lances wagged ludicrously in the knightly hands.

On March 12<sup>th</sup> 1881 Louis Victor Prince of Austria is inscribed as "Victor de Clepheim," and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> the Princess Louise, Marchioness of Lorne, who was then on her wedding tour incognito, writes her name as Lady Sundridge.

The next royal entry is Mary Adelaide, Princess of Great Britain and Ireland, Duchess of Teck, who came in May 1884 with the Duke of Teck and her children, and a large party of friends including the beautiful Lady Windsor, *née* Paget.

Then comes that memorable year 1888, when Florence was a perfect *rendez-vous* of Royalty, and when seven reigning sovereigns lunched together at the Palazzo Pitti. The party which the Queen of Servia chronicles, as visiting Vincigliata on "April 6/18" (the Servians evidently use the double date like the Russians), may have been planned at that very luncheon table. The imposing list is headed "Natalie," "Alexandre," then follow the "Count and Countess de Platoff," "Georges Duc de Leuchtenberg," the ladies of honour of her Majesty the Queen of Servia, and of the Queen of Würtemberg; Baron Wolff, and an imposing array of members of the Strozzi and Torrigiani families in all numbering twenty-four. These all lunched under the trees in the outer court and Queen Natalie was of the gayest, little foreseeing that her boy would be taken from her, and that what was then a pleasure tour away from home would soon be turned into exile. The little Prince had paid a previous visit to Vincigliata in February when he came with Prince Alfred, son of the Duke of Edinburgh, and their respective tutors. The names are entered

ALEXANDRE.

ALFRED.

DR. WOKSU.

DR. ROLFS.

And the last of the Royal visitors inserted in the *Libro d'oro*, who is she? Here is her signature

*Victoria Reed*

*April 15. 1888. —*

With her came the Princess Beatrice, and Prince Henry of Battenberg, and their suites.

Beatrice

*April 15<sup>th</sup> 1888. —*

*Henry of Battenberg*

*April 15<sup>th</sup> 1888.*

*Harriet D. Phipps*

*April 15. 1888*

*Mary D. Masonby April 15 1888*

As for Princes and Princesses not of the blood royal their names are legion. They come from Russia and Poland: Princesses Troubetskoy, and Ypsilanti, Princess Alexandrovna Ghika; — from Rome, Florence, and Naples: the Princes Borghese, Odescalchi, Strozzi, and Corsini, Duke and Duchess of Ceri, and the Prince and Princess of Telamone who were so pleased with Vincigliata that they came twice in one week. Here are German Barons and Gräfin in crowds: the Baron and Baroness Tchudy, a whole family of Barons von Rottenstein, Baron de Hornstein, and Carl von Bunsen; also English aristocracy, such as Lord Plunket Bishop of Meath, now Archbishop of Dublin, with Miss Henrietta Guinness, on April 11<sup>th</sup> 1878; the dowager Viscountess Galway in May 1883, and Lord and Lady Windsor, March 7<sup>th</sup> 1888, with others whose name is legion. One day a party of Spanish grandes: "El Conde de Casa Rojas, y el Visconde de Recamo;" another morning the "Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Soveral" from Portugal. Here come the Earl and Countess of Crawford with a whole party of ladyships from Scotland, and then a group of the Parisian *haut ton*; Count A. de la Rochefoucauld with the Baron Talleyrand Périgord and his friends.

As for the Statesmen and celebrities, the album would prove a mine of treasure to the autograph collector, for in it are the names of the most famous Eu-

ropean Statesmen, beginning from our own Gladstone, his colleagues, and adversaries. Here are the signatures of Thiers, Mignet and other French politicians; Ex-President Grant, and Cardinal McCloskey, Archbishop of New-York, from the new world; with Italian leaders in scores, from the late Bettino Ricasoli, and Quintino Sella downwards. They know how to appreciate it too, for Baron Bettino Ricasoli wrote to Mr. Leader: "Liberal actions should be praised by intelligent and worthy men, and the merit is the greater when they add to the instruction and honour of the country to which they belong. In truth you greatly merit public appreciation, for the intelligent and generous rebuilding of the monumental and historical Castle of Vincigliata. Would that many might follow your example. As for me I am proud to confess myself grateful on the part of the public, on whom you have conferred a benefit by your splendid example."

The Hon. Quintino Sella is even more enthusiastic. "From my visit to the Castle," he writes, "I have formed a high opinion of your character and of the ideal which guided you in your work. If a picture which faithfully recalls past times is valuable, if all that gives us an idea of life in ages preceding us, is precious, should we not say that edifice is incomparably more valuable, which, by accurate study and lavish expense, succeeds in making the domestic life in a

medieval fortress live again in the mind of the intelligent spectator? I therefore feel it my duty as an Italian, and as a cultivator of learning to be grateful for the work so marvellously carried out by you. You claim another title to my gratitude, for planting the ground surrounding the Castle with woods. How much the condition of Italy would be improved if Italians would follow your example! Accept, therefore, not only my thanks, but above all my sentiment of admiration for all that you have done."

Nor are the English visitors less appreciative: the late Earl of Crawford and Balcarres wrote to Mr. Leader on June 5<sup>th</sup> 1875: "When I thanked you for your most interesting account of your reconstruction of the old fortress of the Alessandri, I had not revisited it, since the restoration. I can now say, that I never was more astonished in my life, than when I had the pleasure of going over it a few months ago.—It is a thing *sui generis*, unparalleled in its completeness, and the skill and taste that have presided over everything you have done there. Modern Italy, the heir of the medieval, owes you a deep debt of gratitude for such a work. All my family and myself have to offer you a thousand thanks for the kindness and the courtesy with which you have permitted us to visit it, and to drive through the beautiful woods and roads, which have transformed the face of the country in

your neighbourhood from what I well remember as its appearance, as well as Vincigliata, more than thirty years ago."

The authors inscribed are many, and not a few of them have drawn from the place inspirations for books, notably Signor Marcotti, the Baron de Reumont, Signor Baroni, Lord Lamington and Signor Carocci, who have all written very learned and interesting things on Vincigliata. Besides these the autographs may be studied of many a famous European writer such as Lord Houghton (Richard Monckton Milnes who adds to his name " Poeta Inglesi "), Count Tolstoi, Carl Hillebrand, De Amicis, Villari, Fusinato, Klara Lovic, Charles Yriarte, Madame de Segur, Gallenga, etc. etc. Besides these are the more familiar ones of the poet Swinburne, T. A. Trollope, Hamilton Aidé, Charles Dudley Warner, Marion Crawford, Ouida, Linda Villari, Edgar Taylor, Helen Zimmern and others.

Then there are names in whose ring we hear echoes of medieval Florence and her sturdy burghers, such as Strozzi, Tolomei, Albizi, Alessandri, Visconti, Tornacinci, Martelli, Machiavelli, Niccola Lapi, Capponi, Medici, etc., whose ancestors may have visited the Castle seven or eight centuries ago.

The contrasting parties that rove about the rooms are very curious; here, on January 29<sup>th</sup> 1889, we have a regiment of soldiers, whose officers sign for them, and

express enthusiastic admiration, and there (October 14<sup>th</sup>) a party of nuns and novices from the "Conservatorio di San Giovacchino" with their Mother Superior write that they have "visited this marvellous Castle."

One day the black *soutanes* of the students of the Seminary are fluttering ecclesiastically in and out of chapel and guard-room, another a party of artists or authors roams through them, chatting cleverly and writing epigrams after their names. One day a batch of literary English stars among whom are Bentley and John Forster, another the energetic members of the Alpine club. Then arrive the processions of carriages that announce a Congress. Celebrities from all parts of the world have signed their names, on September 17<sup>th</sup> 1875, when the guests, at the centenary of Michael Angelo made an excursion hither. Here is the report of the journalist "Yorick" one of the number: "We reach Vincigliata. The Castle is open, although the noble proprietor is absent from Florence. The party disperses in the rooms, the court, and the cloisters. The construction almost entirely modern is conducted with such an exquisite sentiment of the antique, with such a happy imitation of form and colour in the frescoes and ornamentation, in the furniture and accessories, with such a rare perfection in every minute particular, that one would swear one saw the feudal manor of a fierce Tuscan baron left intact, silent and

deserted, enchanted like the ancient city of Zobeide ; — ah ! what a splendid house ! ”

Only a few days after this, on September 21<sup>st</sup>, the “ Congress of Italian architects and engineers came, and last year (1889) the “ Historical Congress ” was received at Vincigliata, and after some pages of eminent names we find a warm eulogy of the Castle, which is pronounced “ a worthy monument of history and art, an imperishable record of the manners of the ancient Lords of our fortresses, and of the warlike middle ages.”

But there are less public visitors chronicled in the *Libro d'oro* — this time the gold is the gold of friendship. The master has a circle of friends who meet here year after year to celebrate two or three festal days. The Italians have a pretty custom of keeping the “ giorno onomastico ” or fête of the Saint whose name corresponds to that of the person fêted. In this case the two fêtes are St. Louis, June 21<sup>st</sup>, in honour of Mrs. Leader whose name is Luisa ; and St. John’s day, June 24<sup>th</sup>, for Mr. Leader whose name is John.

The real birth-day of the owner of Vincigliata is also celebrated in the English style. On these occasions the refectory is not only illuminated but filled with guests, and when the fête is recorded in the Album, one or other of the literary stars is generally inspired to verse. At one time it is a humorous poem about the Lord and his vassals, in which all the guests’ names

are woven; at another an epigrammatic toast to Mr. and Mrs. Leader.

Here is a specimen of these impromptu odes and sonnets by Cav. Abele Mancini of Melfi, Basilicata :

Salve! o vetusta mole,  
 Che i secoli sfidando,  
 L'età tu vai narrando  
 Al vate, al pellegrin.  
 Salve, tre volte salve!  
 Tempio di gloria e d'arte!  
 E su famose carte  
 Sia noto all'avvenir  
 Quante dovizie accogli,  
 Quai palpiti tu desti;  
 E imperituro resti  
 Il nobile Signor,  
 Che ai poveri ed all'arte  
 Volge pietose cure:  
 Oh! l'epoche venture  
 Benediranno a te!

As a free translation we may give :

All hail! thou strong and ancient pile  
 That passing centuries dost defy,  
 Thy stones with old-world tales beguile  
 The bard, or pilgrim passing by.  
 Thrice hail! thou fane of glorious art,  
 May future ages reading find  
 In many a famous page or chart  
 The wealth thou hast in thee enshrined.  
 Thou wakest our emotions deep,  
 Yet calm and aye unchanging keep,  
 (In thee is no disparity)  
 And him thy Lord may all time bless,  
 Who on his age leaves his impress,  
 A touch of art and charity.

One evening the party being inspired to poesy, some one proposed a theme in "Rime obbligate" or writing a poem on given rhymes. Not a mere doggrel such as usually results from our games of "Bouts rimés," but a regular sonnet. The sonnet seems indigenous to Italy from the days of Petrarch. There is never a family ceremony, be it birth-day, christening, or wedding-day, but some friend has a sonnet apropos to the occasion. In this case the task was less easy, for 14 rhymes were given, some of which, — especially the words *Simone* and *ballotte*, — bearing reference to the cause of the festivities, led to a similar choice of subjects in all. It was the fête of St. Simon, and of course boiled chestnuts (*ballotte*) took a prominent part on the table at dessert. Italians say:

Per San Simone  
Ballotte e vin nuovo

and also :

Per San Simone si mangia ballotte per divozione  
(On St. Simon's day one eats *ballotte* for devotion).

The custom refers to an old usage among the country people; on St. Simon's day young lovers used to carry a present of the new chestnuts to their betrothed, and expected to be regaled at supper with new wine.

As the Vincigliata sonnets are untranslatable on account of the obligatory rhymes, I give them as they are.

The first is by Padre Giulio Metti, who afterwards became Bishop of Leghorn.

IL SAN SIMONE A VINCIGLIATA.

SONETTO.

Fra i canneillon, lo sbiffe e le ballotte,  
 Fra la sciampagna, il brigidin, la mela,  
 Abbiamo dato affè tali ribotte  
 Che per un pezzo può vogar la vela.

Se fosse ancora giorno, e non già notte,  
 Come ci attesta il lume di candela,  
 Darem sul prato cento belle botte,  
 Come l'ilarità d'ognun rivela.

Dunque gridiamo: Evviva San Simone,  
 Che del marrone sotto la divisa  
 Qui ci ha uniti senz'agro di limone.

I nostri "Evviva" ascoltin dall'Incisa  
 Quando in partir di qui senza lampioncione  
 Direm: "Viva Giovanni e la Luisa."

The second is by the late poet Signor Giuseppe Pieri:

Qui dove siamo a mangiar le ballotte  
 Ed il pasticcio ripieno di mela,  
 Qui dove si conviene a far ribotte  
 Spiega il pensiero ad altri dì la vela.

Quando l'Italia in tenebrosa notte  
 Di libertade spense la candela  
 Qui fu il potente tristo a dar le botte  
 A lei che il vero ai popoli rivela.

E sito mi mostrò contro a Simone  
 E niuno tenne un'egual divisa,  
 Si disputò d'un fico e d'un limone.

Resta perenne in questa mole incisa  
 La gran memoria perchè sia lampioncione  
 A quest'età, se lo suo ben ravvisa.

One of the poets of these classic suppers was the late Cavalier Teseo Prezziner, a great student and writer of Florentine history; on November 18<sup>th</sup> 1868 he records his 31<sup>st</sup> visit, and his name appears quite as frequently afterwards.

Another entry which is always made in the Master's own hand some time in October, is the record of the vintage (*vendemmia*), when he and his family assist in gathering the grapes, which grow in the southern *ballium* and the adjacent *podere*.

Now for the amusing side of the visitors' book. So many persons like to record a thought or an impression, and leave the impress of their character as well as name. One honest visitor confesses himself *non senza invidia* (not without envy), and another "wishes the proprietor would make him his heir." A classical scholar parodies Cæsar and writes "*Veni, vidi et admiravi*;" another quotes Tacitus. A romantic person exclaims :

Tace il labbro, ma il cor rapito parla  
Che qui vetusta età trova ed ammira.

(The lips are silent, but the ravished heart speaks,  
That here admiring it lives in past ages.)

A literary party, comprising Cavalier Priore Commendatore Tommaso Uguccioni, Cavalier Giovanni Lo-

rini, etc., left the following record of their visit on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1868 :

Sul vertice del colle,  
D'età trascorse vivo monumento,  
Maestoso s'estolle  
Il feudal Castello,  
Che non più di feroci odj di parte  
È fatto ostello,  
Ma per insigne  
Di Signor generoso alto concetto  
Or serve all' arte.

(Crowning the hilly land  
A monument of ages long gone by,  
Majestic and grand,  
The fortress doth rise,  
No more does hate ferocious, or fierce feud  
Contest for the prize,  
A more noble part  
By generous gentlehood is now bestowed  
— It serveth for art.)

Another adds in Italian "Blessed be the stranger who comes into Italy, to raise again a monument of its ancient glory," and an enthusiastic Frenchman says: "*Honneur à celui qui avec autant de goût que d'intelligence a su ressusciter un beau joyau.* — JEAN MARIE Bos."

The late Signor Medoro Savini visited the Castle on October 19<sup>th</sup> 1874, and "lived again for an hour in an heroic epoch, forgetting the prose of civilization such as taxes and the civil list."

Here are some patriotic visitors: one lady named Clelia being about to leave for her beloved Lombardy.

" My country is the world, my roof the heavens, mankind are my brethren, and conscience is my judge." Another quotes Leopardi's famous lines beginning :

O dame, o cavalieri,  
O giardini, o palazzi ec.

Some like to be mysterious and write a list of comic false names, or the curious entry " Jenny—Switzerland " while on one page is a veritable " Mr. Barnes of New York ! " Here we have an enigma without an answer, there an acrostic. There are signatures in Arabic, and Chinese, in Welsh, and Russian, in Turkish and Latin, in fact the visitors' book is full of interest to those who know how to look for it.

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MAIANO.



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## THE FATTORIA.

Like his predecessors, Mr. Leader has made himself a home a little nearer the world than the heights of Vincigliata, and spends his autumn months at Maiano, a pretty nucleus of villas on the olive-covered slopes of a hill between Fiesole and Vincigliata, just below Monte Ceceri.

In its way Maiano is quite as full of interest as Vincigliata, but it is of a totally different kind. At the Castle above, everything speaks of the stern feudal times, of wars and party strife ; down here among the leafy vineyards there are many reminiscences of the past, but they are of gentle nuns, of peaceful "Signori," or ardent artists ; for Mr. Leader's *Fattoria* was once a monastery, in his villas lived Florentine cavaliers, and under his vines have walked the sculptors, poets and painters, whose names are household words to us.

Benedetto and Giuliano da Maiano grew up within the sound of the bells that now call the peasants to mass in the village church of Maiano ; Desiderio da Settignano found the stone for his beautiful shrines in the quarries just above ; Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino walked here, and talked not only of Plato, but they imagined a villa on the hill, so working up the delights of this "Château en Espagne," which was to have fountains and woods, a south aspect and all other delights, that Pico exclaimed : "Ah, Ficino ! do you not seem to see the house we have imagined, and longed for, as we see things in a dream ? "

The villa at Maiano seems a fulfilment of this dream, and every rood of the Englishman's estate has a story to tell of Italy in the past.

It is a bright autumn day when we leave the tram at the Doccia, and walk towards Maiano down a winding road, where aloes and oleanders fringe the walls of the villa gardens on one side ; and a little wood of oak, cypress, and ilex straggles down the slopes on the other.

We soon reach the gate and arched entrance of Mr. Leader's *Fattoria*, and find our friend the wood-ranger waiting to introduce us to the *Fattore*.

Probably not all our English readers know precisely what a *Fattoria* is, as we have no equivalent for it in

England. It is the house of the *Fattore* or manager of an estate (in Scotland, Factor) — the place where wine and oil etc. are made. Most of the land in Tuscany is cultivated on the "half-and-half system," i. e. the peasant who undertakes to cultivate a *podere* (or farm) receives no wages in money, but takes half the produce of the crops, rendering the other half to the master. As the owner has to supply the farm stock and utensils, and takes the risks, this kind of farming is not always the most profitable, unless the *contadino* be very honest and industrious, or well watched and directed.

On small estates this is a simple contract between the peasant and land-owner, but on large ones where there are many *poderi* to be worked, it is necessary to employ an overseer, whose office it is to see to the amount of the crops, to rule the expenditure, and division of profits ; and in fact to take the whole supervision of farm duties. Of course a great responsibility rests with the *Fattore*, and in cases where he is not quite disinterested, the peasants experience some of the drawbacks of having a middle-man.

A Tuscan saying refers to this :

Fammi Fattore un anno,  
Se non arricchisco è mio danno.

(Make me *Fattore* for a year, and if I don't get rich, it is the worse for me).

Signore Emilio Fancelli of Maiano, however, is not one of this class. His father was *Fattore* before him ; his brother, the architect, rebuilt Vincigliata, and the whole family are devoted to the interests of the *Padrone* in whose service they have remained honest working men for two generations, a fact reflecting as much honour on the master as on the employed.

The half-and-half system would not be tolerated in England, though the aim of the system is good and fair. It supposes a partnership between capital and labour ; the master representing the former, and taking all the responsibility of the capitalist ; the *contadino* representing labour, and taking the profit thereof. Thus the land belongs to the master, and the *contadino* shares the crops equally with him. The gain is not in such equal proportions however, for the *Padrone* has to supply utensils, farm stock and oxen etc. out of his half, whereas the *contadino* eats and drinks his corn, wine, and oil, unless he be very thrifty, or the *podere* so large that he has enough crops to sell, and to lay by a little money — a very rare case. Nevertheless the Italian peasant has his own ways of saving. He will lay up a store of linen and garments for his daughters' wedding portions, and will endow each of them with a necklace of pearls or coral — one of them of course inherits that of her mother. Of late the *contadino* taste in heirlooms has undergone a change,

and in place of pearls the bridal *dote* is invested in a huge gold chain as thick as one's finger.

The Landlord's liabilities do not end at the farm stock, there often come bad years, the late frost nips the young corn, or cuts off the buds of vines and fruit trees; a great storm floods the *podere*, and prostrates the newly ripened corn; the hail pelts the olives off the trees, or spoils the ripe grapes; then the lessened share is not enough to keep the peasant and his family all the year, so he has to borrow of the *Padrone*. If he has luck he may pay off the debt when the next year's crops come in, if not, the *Padrone* ruefully considers it a bad debt, and thinks that a *podere* is not the best investment for his money. If he be a hard man, he changes his *contadini*, and turns the family adrift to find another master, but with most Italian land-owners the peasants have an hereditary holding, and several generations work successively in the same fields, the *Padrone* showing them a feudal protection. One may be sure from the willing faces and reverential affection, shown to the master of Maiano, as he walks beneath his vines, that his peasants have no fear of bad years weaning them from his kindly care.

There are, in some cases, other compacts between master and labourer, besides the mere division of crops, thus some of Mr. Leader's *patti* sound quite patriarchal.

chal. The *contadini* of the larger *poderi* are bound to render certain services to him during the year, such as digging 100 braccia of earth, either for draining or agriculture ; supplying or planting 50 cuttings of woodland trees or fruit trees, and a hundred faggots. The *contadini* are besides obliged to keep poultry and supply the quota thereof to the *Padrone's* table. The larger *poderi* have to furnish two capons, a couple of chickens, and six dozen eggs.

There are also personal services to be rendered. The *contadini* take a week's service in turn. During this week the one on duty must be each day at the disposition of the master at his house in Piazza Pitti until midday, to assist the porter ; he also brings the provisions, such as dairy and vegetable produce etc. from the *Fattoria*. The peasants take turns, in acting as night-watchmen at the Castle of Vincigliata, and the villa at Maiano ; and their wives do the laundry work for the *Padrone* a month each in turn. As there are twenty-six *poderi*, these duties fall lightly on all.

The very small *poderi* are only bound to the laundry duty, the tribute of plants and poultry being remitted. The little garden of herbs and flowers named *Bon Riposo* is excused even from this slight service. Any peasant who keeps a horse is bound to serve his master's needs with it either for the *Calessino* (country vehicle) or cart, and this service is duly recompensed.

The *Fattoria* is the centre of all this farm work, the *Fattore* regulating the service of the peasants: at Maiano the *Fattoria* may be seen in perfection, for English system has been grafted on Italian industry, and we find our morning here is as instructive as it is interesting. Our first impressions on entering, are certainly more ecclesiastical than agricultural. The great arched doorway is still suggestive of a monastery, for there are the little *grilles*, through which visitors in olden times held their only communication with the devout sisters within; and having passed the porch we find ourselves in a pretty little cloister with a fine fresco of Spinello Aretino's on the wall opposite us.

The monastery well is in the centre, and when we glance into its depths we find it lined with exquisite masses of *capel-venere*, or maiden hair fern. Beside the well a great Seville orange tree is growing, and its spreading branches reach above the first story, nearly filling half of one side of the cloister. Summer and winter that tree has blossomed for centuries, and shrouded nuns have plucked the blossoms, which they might distil into scent, but which never should wreath them for an earthly bridal.

The ground of the cloister is strewn with great oil jars lying about in all directions, and giving quite an oriental air to the arches, the well, and the orange tree. We sit on the low parapet of the cloister and

glancing around discover that the arches on two sides are supported on octagonal pillars, of solid Doric masonry, and on the other two by round pillars with Ionic capitals. The former show the remains of the original cloister, which dates prior to the eleventh century, for at that epoch the nuns possessed the right of entertaining each new bishop of Fiesole, when he went to take possession of his See; an expensive privilege apparently, for a sumptuous feast had to be prepared by the nuns for Bishop, Dean and Chapter, and even the priests and acolytes.

The limited funds of the monastery appear to have proved insufficient for the restorations, as we learn from an old deed in the archives that a certain monk,—Fra Biagio di Loro (brother of "sister Agnes" of their order) who lived in the Spedale of Santo Spirito in Florence,—had advanced a hundred gold florins towards the vaulting of the cloister and other restorations, the nuns binding themselves to give him rooms in the monastery or elsewhere, with a salary sufficient for his expenses as long as he lived. If he elected to live in Florence or away from the monastery, then they were to give him yearly a barrel of wine, and a large jar of oil; and when he died the value of this was to be spent in masses for his soul, with that of Madonna Agnes his sister, and all his benefactors; and moreover that these masses should be on St. Agnes'

day. The monastery was in early times a donative of the See of Fiesole, and the Bishops were its first benefactors. Several of the Popes granted it privileges and donations: thus Pope Martin V gave it the tithes of the Church of "San Miniato a Pagnolle," with the obligation to maintain a priest there; and Alexander VI united with it the oratory and glebe of "San Michele," which was close by the monastery. Another chapel called the "oratory of San Michele" also belonged to the nuns, for we find that in June 1344, Margherita Visdomini (here again we see the Visdomini dispensing ecclesiastical preferment), Abbess of Maiano, placed that chapel under the custody of a *pinzochera* (a lay sister of the order of St. Francis) who was bound to receive there the procession on Rogation days, and to give refreshments to the priests who took part in it.

In 1634 this oratory passed into possession of the canons of the Cathedral of Fiesole with a compact that the fête of San Michael should be kept up, and the priests entertained on Rogation days, besides an annual payment to the canons of two lbs. of Venetian wax.<sup>1</sup> But to return to our monastery, the archives of which contain such a long list of donations and lega-

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<sup>1</sup> The oratory afterwards passed to two other religious companies, and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century fell into disuse, and has now become part of a villa.

cies from devout laymen and women, that in course of time it became quite wealthy, and could afford to pay good artists for its decorations, among which the fresco by Spinello Aretino,— which we have been enjoying all the time we hear these old stories,— must be reckoned the chief. It takes on the wall the whole width of an arch, and represents the "Madonna of Mercy," who is clad in a robe of white and gold, with an outspread mantle sustained by angels over a kneeling group of people—one of those masses of expressive faces which only a true old Florentine master could render interesting. On the right is the Abbess of Maiano in her Benedictine robes, with her nuns and novices in wimples and vestments, and behind them a multitude of women, dressed in flowing *zimarre*, and hooded mantles. On the left a row of popes—evidently early ones, for they wear the single tiara, and not the triple one which was brought in by John XXIII in 1410, nor even the double one which was used by Benedict XII as early as 1334. Behind the popes is a line of solemn monks, and at the back are the laymen of the period in flowing *lucco* and *berretta*. The coloring, though faint with years, is very sweet and harmonious, the extreme lower edge had been effaced,— for between the time of the nuns, and the present owner, the monastery had been let out to peasants, and the cloister made a playground for chil-

dren — but it has now been beautifully restored, by Cavalier Bianchi, who very wisely has not touched the rest of the painting.

Entering the house of the courteous *Fattore*, in whom we are glad to find a brother of the architect of Vincigliata, we can trace everywhere the form of the monastery under the modern dwelling house. The neat little bed-rooms are monastic cells, with their tiny cupboards in the wall and their small deep windows. The kitchen and *sala* are two or three cells in one, from the latter a terrace has been thrown out from which there is a lovely view of Val d'Arno. The old fortress of Vincigliata and Castel di Poggio stand on their cypress-covered hills on the left, and Mr. Leader's villa with its picturesque tower and warm red roof on the right, while his olives and vines clothe the hills between them, which slope down to the plain, where the towers and domes of Florence fill the middle distance.

Over the door of the cell which now forms the *Fattore's bureau*, is an inscription in gilt letters carved into the stone recording the name of

#### S EMILIA PALMERINI

who must have been a recluse with especial pretensions, for her name does not appear on the list of Abbesses.

In a corridor is a scroll of stonework with the arms and names of three other distinguished devotees.

S GINEVRA ADIMARI

S A M COSTANZA

S M. IVSTIN DL BORGO

The first of these was Abbess in 1642, and the last — Sister Maria Justina dal Borgo — is inscribed in the book of the monastery in 1629, as having given four scudi towards the expense of an organ for the Church.

This Register, *Il Registro di Ricordi e Obblighi*, of the sacristy of the monastery of San Martino is extremely interesting, it is an ancient manuscript bound in dark red leather, richly stamped and gilt in the Persian style,— probably a gift from some learned friar who had been to the East in search of manuscripts. — It begins with the Christian monogram, and invocations to the Trinity, the Virgin, and all the Saints, to St. Benedict founder of the order, St. Romolo head of the Fiesole bishopric, and to Pope Martin. After which follows "Here in this book to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, memorandums in the form of an inventory shall be made." Here then we get an insight into all the life and interest of a nun in those days; we find that the holy wafer was kept in a bone box, probably one of those carved caskets peculiar to the era,

and that an embroidered cushion was put on the seat of the Father Confessor. We learn the contents of the sacristy, from the five crosses and crucifix, even down to the six brooms and two bundles of matches, which last cost a *crazia* (7 centimes). Here we find the inventory of the *corredo* (trousseau) of the waxen Madonna, who changed her rich garments according to the season, and had different mantles of white flowered damask, of taffeta, of yellow satin, of red and ermine, of blue damask, and of yellow stuff. We learn that the nuns took turns in the care of the sacristy, each holding that office for a year, and we may be sure that each one recorded her own especial works, though they write that this is "not for vain glory, but to excite devotion in others, that they may do like good works, and to prevent the ambition of those who in times to come might appropriate the credit of that which they have not done."

Thus in 1707 Sister Angiola Felice Del Nero mended the veil used on the *fête* of Corpus Domini, which was much torn, and re-trimmed the drapery of white and cloth of gold, with gold lace; but it being a very tedious work to transfer the embroidery she availed herself of the "assistance of eight or ten nuns who were skilled in that kind of work, and who executed it with diligence and charity." Sister Francesca possessed no money of her own, but in her year of office

she induced her father Signor Francesco Poggi to give a crimson *pianeta* trimmed with silver. The "mother chamberlain" kept silkworms in 1779 and with the profit on them she bought a chalice which cost 30 *scudi*. True, she was seven pauls short of the price, but her sisters made it up.

Then more economies are chronicled, rather a touching entry this time. A certain novice, when she took the vows in 1781, presented to the sacristy a green brocade gown which she had worn in the gay world, and the industrious nuns fashioned it into a gorgeous vestment trimmed with gold.

Then we get a glimpse at the devout excitements which break the dead calm of conventional life.

There was a day, August 14<sup>th</sup> 1586, when the ancient Madonna of Fiesole, called the Primerana, was carried in procession round Fiesole and then left for some time at the monastery at Maiano, where the nuns burned many a candle in its honour; again it is written "on Good Friday 1714, we made a grand (*maestoso*) sepulchre, with a hundred and twenty lights, and Monsignor Panciatichi with all the seminary came to visit it, to his profound consolation; and he, seeing that the coffer which holds the Host was very ancient, promised us a new painted one of the value of five *scudi*."

In 1730 there is the unusual record of the Baptism of an English baby, "the daughter of the illustrious

Signor Berti of England,<sup>1</sup> by permission of Monsignor M. Strozzi and the nuns of this monastery. The god-father was Signor James Collins and the child was named Elizabeth Pellegrina."

With this we will close the book and resume our explorations.

The next door we open brings us back from the past into the active business of the present, for it is the door of the drying room. Here are layers on layers of matting supported on frames, and on them are different kinds of grapes in process of drying, the red ones are kept to *rigovernare*—i. e. to put into the new wine when the fermentation is over,—the white grapes are chosen to dry and make *vin santo*, and the richest black kinds for *aleatico*. The largest grapes are kept for the table. The roof is festooned with red garlands of tomatoes and pendants of garlic and onions.

On the floor below this we may see all the work of the *Fattoria*. Here is the granary with its heaps of corn and sacks of wheat, a yellow mountain of maize, a brown hill of *saggina* for the poultry, a grey one of oats, etc.; and next to it the laboratory, a large place full of sieves and strainners, flasks and baskets, flour bins, and cupboards, funnels and siphons, packing

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<sup>1</sup> Probably Burt, or Bertie, which is an old English name.

cases and corks. At the end is a revolving sieve which sifts flour simultaneously into several compartments, beginning from the finest to the last and coarsest kind, after which the bran is cast out at the end. Then there is a bottling room with its crates, cork pressers, and seals, and a locked up room where 36 barrels of *vin santo* have been kept to ripen so long that a perfect veil of cobwebs, eloquent of mellowness, have been woven about them. Indeed so rich and mellow is the Maiano *vin santo* that the Princess Victoria now Empress Frederick pronounced it very much like Tokay.

Now we descend to the ground floor, and here in what used to be the refectory, an immensely long room, whose arched roof is supported on brackets, the oil is stored. What a quantity of oil must those four and twenty Ali Baba jars contain which are ranged on a raised platform all round the room ! for each one is capable of containing 10 or 15 barrels, each barrel weighing 90 lbs. and in good years they are not only all full, but are double in number. It used to be a puzzle to our childish brains, how the forty thieves got into the jars ? that question is solved here, for each jar could hide two or three men ; the only enigma that remains is, how Morgiana's limited cauldronful of oil was rendered sufficient to kill them all ?

We are not the first to make the allusion it seems,

for we are told that when the same Princess Victoria entered the oil room she exclaimed gaily: "Morgiana and the forty thieves."

"What a loss it would be, if one of these jars were to break," one of us remarks.

"We have guarded against that," replies the *Fattore* pointing out the peculiar structure of the floor, which slopes a little towards the centre, down the whole length of which a grating is inserted. A conduit is placed beneath this, so that any oil which may chance to be spilled is carried off to a receptacle below and re-purified. Of course the grating is artistic — a graceful scroll in perforated iron work.

"And how is the oil purified?"

"I will show you," says the *Fattore* as he smilingly leads the way to

THE CHIARITOIO (*clarifying room*),

a vast place all arches and pillars, which must surely in olden times have been the great kitchen of the monastery.

Here we see the last process of oil making, the clarification. The first thing that strikes us are certain mysterious names, such as *mandorle* (the almonds), *santo* (the saint), *ragnaia* (the cobweb),<sup>1</sup> *grillo* (the tree

<sup>1</sup> *Ragnaia* is the name of a long strip of oaks with a little water in the middle for taking thrushes and other small birds.

cricket), etc., appended to the walls and in front of each label stand two immense *conche* (pans) large enough to contain 50 or 60 gallons each, many of them partly filled with oil. "What have cobwebs and saints, not to mention crickets and other creatures, to do with pans of oil?" we enquire; and learn that the labels on the walls are the names of the twenty-six different *poderi* belonging to Mr. Leader, that the peasant who cultivates each *podere* brings his oil to his especial pan, to be clarified; this being done, it is weighed and divided, he taking his share, which is half of the produce.

Above the pans a shelf runs the whole length of the walls, and holds the barrels in which the oil is to be placed, to be carried away. Some good years the combined amount reaches 1200 barrels or more.

But to return to the clarifying process. The finest or first drawn oil is placed in one pan and the last drawn or coarsest in another. The fine oil remains on the surface and becomes pure in a few days, but the other kind requires to be put into hot water to be cleared, it is then called *sansa*. The clarifying room is furnished with a great furnace for heating water, and with hot pipes across it to keep the atmosphere tempered, so that the oil should not freeze in winter.

We seem to have been tracing the process of oil making backwards, for instead of following it upwards

from the olive tree to the dinner table, we have seen its latter phases first, and now trace it back to

THE STRETTOIO (*oil mill*).

We follow a man with a long basket of olives on his back into a great vaulted space where immense cogwheels are slowly revolving over our heads in a fitful jogging sort of way. The largest wheel turns the smaller cogs of three oil mills arranged in a triangular position round it.

The oil mill consists of a huge stone wheel revolving upright around an immense stone basin, and crushing the olives in its course. A man stands at the edge of the basin with a wide spade in his hands, shoveling some of the brown greasy masses of half crushed olives beneath the wheel at every turn. The motive power of the whole machine is to be seen in the floor above the mill, where a white ox is driven slowly round and round, turning the bar which moves the large wheel. When more than one mill is required, two oxen are harnessed.

As soon as the olives are thoroughly crushed, the reeking brown mass is put into certain circular bags of woven hemp resembling lobster pots, and these being placed in a strong steel-bound press, two men squeeze the oil out by hanging with all their weight on a long bar which acts as lever. The oil oozes into

an underground receptacle whence it is carried to the pans in the clarifying room.

Each peasant takes his turn in the use of the mills. In the busy season they are all three occupied at once. Olives are gathered in the winter months, when they ripen and fall off the trees. The *podere* is a busy scene at that time when men, women, and children are all to be seen at work; the men mounted on the branches of the trees, girls with outspread aprons catching the fruit as it falls, and children stooping to pick up the brown berries from the furrows beneath the dusky olives. A farm in Italy reminds one of the Biblical Canaan, for its produce is corn, wine and oil. We have seen the first and the last, now there remains for us to see the wine made. For this the *Fattore* takes us to

#### THE TINAIA,

a large cellar-like place, furnished with monstrous *tini*, or iron-bound tubs of wood, each one holding several hogsheads, and every one labelled with the name of a *podere*. Into these vats the grapes are put when plucked, and here they are stamped or pounded till the *tino* is full of juice, which is left a week or two to ferment, and then being drawn off by means of a tap at the bottom forms the best wine. The skins and stems are afterwards pressed in a *gabbia* (cage), and the liquid forms the *vino stretto* or less fine quality of wine.

There is still a third process and a third quality of wine known as *acquerello* (wine and water). The residue of the grapes — skins, seeds and stalks — are put into a vat, and a quantity of water is poured over them; after a few days this is drawn off, and makes a very light drink for the summer. Last of all the pips are collected, and given to the pigeons.

There are various processes to be gone through such as the *rigovernatura* or mingling of half dried red grapes after the first fermentation, to give the wine a rich colour and flavour, before it is finally carried to the

CELLAR,

where there are rows of great hogsheads, two or three yards in diameter each with a porcelain label stating the quality and quantity of the wine, and the year of the vintage. The quantity of wine made yearly at the *Fattoria* varies from 600 to 1200 barrels.

The *Fattore*, though a busy and responsible man, is yet under authority, for above him is the *Maestro di casa* who issues orders, examines the accounts, and exercises a general superintendance over the whole estate. Mr. Leader's *Maestro di casa* is Signor Alessandro Papini, a gentleman well known for his handsome presence, wit, and abilities.

A list of the poderes under his vice rule may fitly end this chapter :

1. Ragnaia.
2. Villa di Maiano.
3. Marmigliano.
4. Fornace (the kiln).
5. Tatti.
6. Pian di Novoli.
7. Podere di Mezzo.
8. Chiesa (church of Vincigliata).
9. Careggi.
10. Torre (the tower or Castle).
11. Vanella.
12. Noce (the nut) at Ontignano.
13. Mazzi (the bundles) Fiesole.
14. Villa già Catanzaro.
15. Mulinaccio (old mill).
16. Mandorle (almonds).
17. Mezzana.
18. Casa al vento (house exposed to the wind).
19. Torricella (little tower).
20. Orto di Maiano.
21. Grillo (tree cricket).
22. Camerata.
23. Bon riposo (good repose).
24. Lastrone (large flat stone).
25. Santo (the saint).
26. Corbignano.

It is interesting to know that n<sup>o</sup>s 1, 6, 9, 10, 15,

17, 19 and 25 are the same *poderi* under the same names, which were held by Giovanni Bartoli Usimbardi in 1335 and in his will left by him to his son Niccolò and his cousins, five hundred and fifty years ago.

We are copying the names from the *Fattore's* book while enjoying the view on his beautiful terrace, and waiting for the hospitable lunch to which we are invited; for, be it known, that our friend the woodman — who also has his abiding place here — has other accomplishments besides a knowledge of the forests. He has quite a special genius for cooking beefsteaks, and as for his omelettes they are as light as a feather! His collations (*colazioni*) are quite an institution, and the master's guests are often regaled at the *Fattoria*. One such occasion was that on which Mr. Leader's old friend Gladstone lunched here on January 11<sup>th</sup> 1888 with him, after just such a morning as we have spent in inspecting the processes of oil-making, and learning how an Italian *podere* is managed. Host and Guest had been fellow students at Christ Church Oxford 60 years ago, they had also been colleagues in Parliament. On this meeting at Maiano the politician being blithe with the memory of old days, and inspired with the beauty of the rural life in the land of the vine and olive half sang

*Beatus ille qui procul negotiis,*

and his host, not the less an admirer of Horace, responded so aptly that in alternate strophes they recited the whole ode as though they had been still young classical students at Alma Mater.

Gladstone was insatiable in his search for knowledge about Italian agrarian affairs, and wanted to know every minute particular. He would have seen the working of the *podere* system, at its best here, for never were Italian *contadini* more favourably placed than under this English master, to whom they are all evidently attached, for every face brightens into smiles as the "Signor Padrone" passes by with some genial remark. No doubt the peasant profits more than the master, who considers the *Fattoria* rather in the light of a plaything for his occupation, than a profitable investment.

This renewed intercourse did not end here, for much of the Statesman's time in Florence was passed with Mr. Leader, who was the companion of the Gladstones in exploring Fiesole, the whole family driving afterwards to Vincigliata where they lunched. Another day (the 18<sup>th</sup>) was spent by the Gladstone family (including the Rector of Hawarden and his wife, with the Hon. J. Wallop, familiarly called Jock by his friends) at Maiano, where they explored the stone quarries of Monte Ceceri, and the rock-bound bath, and Mrs. Gladstone played the organ at the church

of Maiano. The Palazzo Pitti, Petraia, Certosa and other sites were also enjoyed by them under Mr. Leader's guidance. At the Certosa Gladstone was actually out-talked by Padre Mac Mahon of Kilrush. Miss Helen Gladstone was delighted with that convent, and wished she could have such a place for her college at Cambridge.

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### THE CHURCH OF SAN MARTINO.

From the peaceful avocations of an Italian farm we pass with a step into the still more peaceful calm of the church; for the chapel of the nuns, which is now the parish church of Maiano, is literally under the same roof as the *Fattoria*.\* A flight of steps and a side door in one of the busy vaults we have described brings us to a quiet little *piazzetta*, with the *Canonica* or priest's house on one side, and opposite to it the façade of the church with its "La Robbia" St. Martin in the lunette over the door. All is so fresh and new that we do not recognise the antiquity of the little building till we enter its single lofty nave, where in the solid walls, and stone bench surrounding them we have evidence that we are in a building, dating certainly from Giotto's time — for that stone seat along the whole length of the walls was never used

after the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It is probable — as we have proof of its existence in the 11<sup>th</sup> century — that this was one of the nine hundred and ninety churches which the Countess Matilda of Tuscany caused to be built. Its present form is that of a latin cross, but it is evident that the choir and transepts were added later, so we may suppose that like most of Matilda's churches this one originally consisted of the simple lofty nave and perhaps a semicircular apse. The roof is in its original form, a gable supported on wooden beams. The length of the nave is 60 feet 2 inches, its width 21 feet 2 inches ; there are two windows in it, one of which was filled with painted glass in 1554, by the nuns Sister Brigida de' Rossi, and Sister Antonia Adimari, who also presented to the church a painting of the " Assumption of the Virgin."

A third wheel-window, with a beautiful representation of the Madonna and Child in coloured glass by De Matteis, lights the nave. The choir has a rood-loft, and is of much later architecture than the nave.

The Register of the nuns, from which we have before quoted, contains several entries which serve towards the history of the church ; here we find under the date of 1477: " In the name of God Amen. I, Sister Bartolomea will note down the expenses I shall make for the restoration of the church, the which fell in a great storm (the nuns used a curious expression *gran fortuna*

*di tempo).* Precisely on the day of St. Bartholomew, at an hour before sunset, there fell down both the church, and the bell tower; and everything was injured in the *poderi*, the olives and vines all beaten down, we could gather nothing at all. God and St. Martin help us."

Probably the choir was at that time rebuilt in its present form, for in 1497 there is an entry dated June 9<sup>th</sup>: "All the accounts which we have had to make with Sister Antonia, Abbess of the convent of Maiano, for the chapel of the high altar in the said church are paid, and with one accord every person who has had anything whatever to do for it has been paid by me Ser Antonio di Niccolò, *cappellano* of the same. The expenses of the chapel all being paid amounted to 200 lire."

Other improvements are recorded in 1554 and 1669, and again in 1830, when the pavement was renewed, the drainage improved (for the floor was damp from percolations from the cemetery), and some of the altars were restored by Padre Antonio Gonelli, parish priest.

The latest restorations are those made by the present proprietor, who may be said to have nearly rebuilt the church. He it was who added the stone balustrade in front of the high altar, — the work of the other two altars, and the coloured glass windows, which are fine works by De Matteis; also the small bell tower, and the glazed terracotta relief of "San Martino" over the door.

The old organ was also renovated and enlarged at the expense of Mr. Leader, who had the organ builder in his house for several months until the nuns' ancient instrument had become a good modern organ. The same benefactor also removed the cemetery, for its ground touched the wall of the church, and was several feet above the level of the interior, causing the percolations that troubled Padre Gonelli.

But to go back to the good works of the nuns so quaintly chronicled in their book. In 1573 Sister Marietta and Sister Fiammetta spent thirty gold scudi in gilding and carving, for the adornment of the Madonna on one of the altars ; and in 1584 the reverend Sister Maria Benedetta, " moved by zeal for the honor of our Lord God, and for the adornment of the church of the said convent, caused an *ancona* or altar to be made, entirely new, and most ornamentally adorned with a picture containing the Madonna in the midst, St. Martin on the right, and St. Benedict, Abbot and head of the order, on the left. And it was ornamented with the finest gold." Here follows the account, by which we find that the master carver was paid 224 lire, the gilder 231, and the master painter 240. There were also the smaller expenses of the builder who fixed it, the custom-house dues and porters, etc., " all of which Sister Maria Benedetta has paid at her own expense, and may our Lord God accept it for the benefit of her soul and

the preservation of her life in this world, and to her increasing in virtue and health and every other good."

This painting is a very good specimen of the later Florentine school, and is now placed over the entrance door. It has been attributed to Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, but this is impossible, as he was no longer alive in 1584.

This pious gift awaked the zeal of three other "reverend and courageous young nuns: Sister Maria Benigna, Maria Francesca, and Ginevra degli Adimari, to perform another worthy and laudable work, in placing a picture on the altar of the Crucifixion (once that of Saint Agnes), and to dedicate the altar anew to the "Holy Rosary of the Annunciation." And these three reverend nuns "having made between themselves this most devout and praiseworthy proposition, they with their own personal fatigue and faculty called together Giovanni Battista the wood carver, Maestro Giovanni Battista the painter, and Maestro Paolo the gilder, and agreed with each the price for the work appertaining to his calling, and then gave the order how the picture was to be made." How well we can imagine this interview! the keen ruddy faces of the Florentine artists, and the white wimpled nuns, whose pure and serious faces, though lit with enthusiasm for their offering, would nevertheless be tempered with anxiety not to be drawn into too great expenses. How the six Tuscan tongues would

have chattered! the men reasoning, the saintly women protesting and pleading, till all was arranged for the sum of 80 scudi—or 560 lire—between them, besides the extra expenses of curtain and fringe, etc. etc.

On June 20<sup>th</sup> 1621 an interesting ceremony took place, which the nuns thus describe: "On Sunday the Illustrious and Reverend Monsignore Tommaso Ximenes, Bishop of Fiesole, consecrated our church in honor of St. Martin, bishop and confessor,—as was the ancient title of the church;—and, in the high altar he placed the following relics, i. e. a relic of St. Quirinus, of St. Fulgens, St. Severianus, and Sts. Januarius and his companion martyr, as well as of one of the Eleven thousand virgins of St. Ursula; the which holy rite was performed with decent solemnity, and the usual indulgence of 40 days annually granted to every person who visits the church on the anniversary of the day of consecration. And at the said ceremony were present all the clergy of the Cathedral, and other priests and monks, and great multitudes of people, and there were also present two of our *Operai* (committee of works for the restorations) Signor Jacopo dal Borgo, and Signor Baccio Martelli, Florentine gentlemen, and this shall be a perpetual memorial, etc."

The former of the two gentlemen was probably the father of one of the nuns Justina dal Borgo, who in 1629 assisted in the expenses of a new organ, which replaced

the more primitive instrument for which Sisters Dianora and Lodovica had paid 20 ducats in 1545-46. In 1764 Michelangelo Crudeli of Lucca restored it again.

Opposite the organ in the church is a large monumental tomb to "Agostino del Nero," whose daughter was a nun in the adjoining monastery. He decreed by his will in January 1572, that wherever he died his body should be carried to Maiano and buried in the church of the monastery; accompanied only by the monks of the Doccia, and that the nuns should have no expense nor obligation to say masses for him, only he prayed that each time they passed by to the choir, they would say a *Miserere* or a *De profundis*, so that God may have mercy on his soul. The tomb consists of an arch of *macigno* placed on two lions carved in marble, with the family arms — a hound rampant in field sable — and the inscription:

D. O. M.

AUGUSTINO NERIO PATRICIO FLORENTINO

PORCILIANI CASTRI IN AGRO LATINO REGULO

CUNCTIS HONORIBUS IN REP. FUNCTO

NERUS ET FRANCISCUS F. PATRI CARISSIMO

AUGUSTINUS NEPOS AVO OPTIMO

MULTIS CUM LACHRIMIS POSUERE

VIX AN. LXXI MEN. VII D. XX

OBIIT VII ID. MAI. ANNO SAL. M D LXXVI.

The *Porciliiani Castri in agro Latino* of which Del Nero was the feudal Lord, is now the King's favourite hunting ground, — Castel Porziano.

The pulpit of the church was also a gift of one of Del Nero's posterity, a certain Filippo Del Nero, in 1630.

The priest now takes us behind the choir and into the sacristy, near which is a large room with a few presses and some paintings. This must be the room which the nuns called *la sala vecchia* (the old hall), and which the Abbess Donna Elisabetta Angela Milanesi restored, and made into a chapter-house in 1714, as the devotees had no convenient place for holding their chapters. "On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1714, they brought here in procession the miraculous image of the Madonna; and Donna Maria Geltrude Corti at her own expense and for pure devotion made the altar for it." An ancient chest here contains some treasures which the priest is proud to display. One a fine missal in red and black letters dated 1682, which is richly bound in gilded leather with a plate and clasps in silver *repoussé*.

Next he takes out a beautiful thurible in the form of a temple, made in chased silver, and swung on long silver chains, and also a *navicella* or boat-shaped vessel for holding incense, which has angels modelled on the covers.

## THE NUNS' GARDEN.

The prettiest and most suggestive place about the monastery is the garden to which Mr. Leader himself becomes our guide. A long grassy path beneath fruit trees leads us to a tiny chapel or oratory, round the arched doorway of which climbing plants are clinging. It has an arched roof, and on the end wall a fresco representing the "Madonna enthroned" with St. John and St. Martin on the right, St. Filippo Neri and St. Benedict on the left. This oratory was built and decorated in 1633 at the expense of Sister Maria Donati. Beside this is a little *campo santo* enclosed by a low wall, and here in old times the nuns were buried. When the monastery was suppressed, and desecrated by the French under Napoleon I, the nuns were united to those of San Donato in Polverosa; and in 1802 with the name of Angiola Teresa Buti closes the long list of Mothers Superior which begins with Mother Cecilia in 1132. Even their remains were removed from the forsaken "God's acre" where they had lain in peace, but the master still respects the spot, and it is dedicated to flowers of the sweetest odour. Beds of Neapolitan violets cover the ground, and a perfect hedge of sweet scented carnations and clove pinks fringes the top of the low parapet which encloses it.

Seated in this peaceful little place one's mind becomes retrospective, and pictures the white veiled figures that once trod these green paths beneath the fig trees. Each one was alone in soul and shut out from the world, although she only had to glance before her, and see the sun shining on the roofs and spires of busy Florence, where she had left all she loved behind her, never to go out again,— never to see mother or father at the family hearth,— never again to receive the kiss of human affection. What sad achings there must have been in some young hearts! what longings to escape from the shadows of the monastery, to the sunny and wide world below, for not all were willing devotees. In olden times, a girl who from constitution or family circumstances was not eligible for marriage was doomed to the cloister from her early youth, and sacrificed to it with all the pomp and ceremony due to sacrifice.

The nuns themselves record the consecration of seven of their order to vows of perpetual seclusion. "On the fourteenth day of June 1648 seven nuns of this our convent of San Martino at Maiano were consecrated by the Illustrious and most Reverend Monsignore Roberto Strozzi, Bishop of Fiesole — a solemn mass having been sung by the principal musicians from Florence, with a diversity of instruments, and the assistant clergy were — (here follows a long list

of clergy, canons, and prevosts) — with many of the Florentine nobility and other persons. And after mass was sung we went in procession with the seven nuns to the little church of the Madonna, and the Bishop consigned them to perpetual seclusion." Sister Maddalena Giovanna Nardi, member of an old Florentine family, was one of the seven who gave up freedom and sunshine for their whole lives under the idea that they served God by cutting themselves off from all his good gifts. Only once a year was the seclusion broken, when by an antique usage the recluses came forth from their cells for eight days, not for any great religious festival, but — it seems a bathos to record it — to make *lasagne*. Lasagne are made of paste of the same grain as maccaroni, which is rolled flat, and cut into pieces, then dried and kept for use. Probably the good nuns made a large supply while the flour was fresh, and called in all available assistance. They were cooked either with cheese like maccaroni or stewed in gravy.

Having with the thought of this succulent edible come down from the regions of retrospect, we stroll away from the cemetery and gather sweet flowers in the wider gardens above, where on this November day, perfect beds of jonquils are nodding their white clusters of blossoms in the sun, just as though they had mistaken the brilliant light for spring sunshine; where

cape jasmine and mignonette are blooming, and hyssop and sage, thyme and rue add their more pungent odours. And so we leave the convent-fattoria and follow the master to his own country house whose red roof and picturesque tower we have seen amidst the cypresses from the *Fattore's* terrace.

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### THE VILLA TEMPLE-LEADER

is a good specimen of a Florentine Villa of the 15<sup>th</sup> cent. In some ways it is modernized, but the form and general style are still preserved. A large Doric portico has been added to the front, which like most Florentine houses of that period presented a wide flat expanse of masonry, only pierced with stone-bound windows protected by iron gratings. The tower crowned by a loggia, from whose arches the most magnificent panorama on all sides is to be obtained, is also new, as is the second floor of the Villa. The architect for these restorations was Prof. Comm. Felice Francolini.

The first room we enter from the northern door is a huge hall, the height of the ground and first floors; a gallery with stone balustrades runs round the entire walls at about half the height, and gives access to all the rooms on the first floor.

This ideal ball-room (which supports the tower) was built for Mr. Leader by the architect to whom the restorations of the Villa were confided. There was formerly a kind of court-yard in its place, which being open towards the north made the rooms very cold. The gallery round it is very useful in freeing the rooms on the first floor, which were formerly uncomfortably arranged one within the other. The furniture corresponds well with the style of the room, and is covered with some beautiful cinquecento appliquéd work which came from the D' Elci palace of Siena. It is a fine scroll of crimson velvet appliquéd in needle-work on gold coloured satin, and was very much admired by the Princess Victoria of Germany, now the Empress Frederick, when she visited Mr. Leader here in 1875 with her lamented husband, and the present King and Queen of Italy then crown Prince and Princess.

The immense chimney-piece in this really baronial hall is a work of fine art, and was carved in stone by Francesco di Pasquale Giovannozzi of Settignano. The work is exquisite, the most life-like birds nestle amongst the flowers, all carved in high relief. One of the pilasters of the chimney-piece, the only part then finished, was exhibited at the first London exhibition in 1851. We will sit a while before it, while recalling the story of the Villa, so that we may be in the right vein for exploring the rooms. In 1427 the house

was in the possession of Monna Antonia di Buonaccorso Boscoli, widow of Andrea Tolosini. Her nephew and heir Giovanni di Bandino Boscoli, who was an ex-monk, sold both Villa and *podere* about 1464, to Benedetto son of Bartolommeo degli Alessandri, one of the family then living at the Castle of Vincigliata. After fourteen years of peaceful possession Messer Benedetto fell upon evil days, and the same storm which destroyed the church of the nuns was also the ruin of this Villa which lies close to it. Messer Benedetto himself says in his report to the Commune in 1481: "As it is well known that on St. Bartholomew's day in the year 1478<sup>1</sup> there came a great storm of wind (*una fortuna di vento*) at Maiano, which threw to the ground the house I inhabit, and also ruined the houses of the peasants, the olives and other fruits, with such a great loss of property, that three hundred large florins would not pay the damage which that "fortuna" did for me—as you yourselves must very well know." Clearly the old word "fortune" ought to be read misfortune in this case. Messer Benedetto had a wife, named Marsobilia degli Orsini, who seems to have added much to his pecuniary embarrassments, for we read that on

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<sup>1</sup> Here Messer Benedetto's memory must have failed him or the nuns have mistaken the year, for they report the *gran fortuna di vento* as happening on St. Bartholomew's day 1477.

(*Libro di Ricordi*, etc.)

her account, as well as for mercantile reasons, he was debtor for so large a sum to Conte Guido Sforza of Santa Fiora (a village in the Sienese district), that the Villa was by the Council adjudged to him in payment, but his son Count Federigo sold it to the doctor Girolamo di Bartolommeo Buonagrazia; the deed of sale, endorsed by the notary Ser Antonio Rovai, is dated February 1<sup>st</sup> 1510. Girolamo's son being left a minor his guardians sold it to Alfonso di Luigi Pazzi, a long line of whose descendants inhabited it till A. D. 1700.

The Pazzi family was composed of conflicting material, and comprised both sinners and saints. In one of their villas on this Fiesole hill, the feast was made when Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici were invited to meet the Cardinal Riario and — though this was not specified in the invitation — to "come and be killed." Fortunately Giuliano declined the invitation, and the plan of the assassination in the Duomo was decided on instead, which resulted in the exile or death of so many of the Pazzi family, and in their effigies as traitors being painted on the walls of the Bargello.

This conspiracy was all over more than a century before this house became their home, and the exiled Pazzi were again in power both in their city palaces, and their country villas. The family was now proud of its saint, Santa Maddalena de' Pazzi, who took the veil and entered the convent of Santa Maria degli

Angioli, in the parish of San Frediano at Florence. As a child she is said to have lived much in this Villa, and we are shown the room supposed to have been hers, a square lofty apartment next the kitchen, now used as a servants' hall.

The Saint began her devout career in her infancy by refusing to eat the cooling watermelon, of which she was so fond ; she taught the "christian doctrines" to the peasant children, and wove herself thorny crowns of prickly pomegranate branches ; in her childish walks she recited orations, and so injured her health by these infantine asceticisms that the doctor had to be called in. Her writings show that she loved nature, and in these childish days she took note of the doves "whose lament is a song and who sing in lamentation," of the shy partridge, the homely red-breasts, and the fruits "some of which ripen early and some late." At the age of sixteen she voluntarily gave up both country delights and town gaieties and took the veil. Her conventional life was remarkable for accesses of spiritual fervour, or that kind of hysteria which in those days usually marked the emotional recluse. At one time she rang the convent bells and called excitedly to the sisters "Come all of you *ad amare l'amore.*" At another time she plunged into icy water to extinguish the inward fire which devoured her. Her portrait shows a delicate but emotional face

with large eyes, and flexible mouth; a face capable of great expression. This was the ecstatic devotee whom in 1620 Pope Urban II pronounced a "Beata," and whose fame so rose after her death that Pope Clement IX canonized her in 1669.

Some of the Pazzi were like most Florentines of their day of a literary turn of mind, and one of them being a friend of Gio. Mazzuolo (known as Padre Stradano) took a part in starting the literary society called the "Umidi" which was instituted for the purpose of reading the classics and keeping the Italian language pure. In the following century this society merged into the "Crusca," which is still extant. He was also a member of the more jovial and lighter social clubs, the Accademia dei "Piacevoli" and "Piattelli" where wit and humour were cultivated.

This branch of the Pazzi family became extinct in 1700 when Luigi di Cosimo died, leaving his fortune to his sister Camilla, wife of Cav. F. Grifoni, from whom it passed to their son Michele Grifoni. So encumbered was the estate, however, by the debts of his uncle Luigi Pazzi, that on September 10<sup>th</sup> 1710 Michele sold the Villa to Matteo de' Neri Tolomei and his brother, from whose descendants Mr. Temple-Leader acquired it on February 11<sup>th</sup> 1850, the purchase being made *a cancello chiuso* (with closed gates, including everything then in the house) by which besides the Villa,

he became possessor of many interesting pictures and family relics.

We now pay a visit to Mrs. Leader in a cosy morning-room where the sun shines in through a veil of flowers, and the walls are hung with artistic treasures. Here is the head of a girl, a charming work by Gaspar Netscher; a fine portrait of Lady Maynard by Sir Joshua Reynolds; a landscape by Breughel, and a collection of ivory miniatures of ladies in the time of Louis XIV and XV, which would have delighted Horace Walpole. Then Mr. Leader takes us to see other pictures and we pass through various rooms and are interested in many retrospections. The red drawing-room contains some fine views of Venice by Francesco Guardi, so like those of his master — Canaletto — that the two hands can scarcely be distinguished. They have all the limpidity that can be desired, but as in Canaletto's works, so also there is less variety of tint in Guardi's pictures than the artists of this century have discovered in the wonderful streets of Venice.

A life-size — almost full-length — portrait of Lord Brougham with his characteristic face strikes our attention. "That was painted forty-five years ago," says Mr. Leader, giving us an amusing story of it. "A certain Miss Flaherty in her enthusiasm for Lord Brougham's eloquence in the two causes of diffusion of knowledge, and suppression of the slave trade, gave him

L. 30,000, so he said that I should get some good out of his windfall, and he gave me that portrait painted by Gambardella. Lord Brougham was rather an impatient sitter however, and when the face was done, he flatly refused to waste his time in sitting for the hands. 'Anybody's hands will do,' said the statesman, so 'Gallenga,' who was a friend of Gambardella, posed for the hands."

This circumstance might prove rather puzzling if a physiognomist and professor of palmistry should in some future age chance to compare notes on Lord Brougham's character, for the face has all the statesman's rugged keenness, and the hands show the delicate tapering fingers of the artistic temperament. The ex-minister was at the time living in the Château Eléonore at Cannes where Mr. Leader had also a Villa. The room has two good portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Leader taken many years ago by the painter Manara, and a beautiful landscape by Richard Wilson. There are several large mirrors which once formed part of Prince Borghese's noted forty mirrors.

The dining-room, which is of a cool green tone, is hung with pictures once belonging to the former inhabitants of the Villa. The Pazzi have left two views formerly in their palace at Florence where the *Banca Nazionale* now stands; one of Naples and one of Messina, which being taken in the 16<sup>th</sup> century are now

archæologically interesting. There are some fine portraits of the Tolomei who owned the house after the Pazzi. One of them is that of a nun — for they also had a *Beata* in the family, — born in 1513, who was known to the world as Fiammetta, but who took the veil as Sister Humility (Umiltà) and was raised to the rank of *Beata* after her death, which took place in the Convent of Boldrone in September 1591. Then comes her nephew Giovanni Maria Tolomei Gucci, and Margherita Frescobaldi who first married in 1644 Neri Tolomei Gucci, and afterwards became the wife of Piero Mazzoni Count d' Urbech ; these portraits and those of two of the sons of Count d' Urbech are all fine paintings by Sustermans; they are represented in red *lucco* and point lace, and are very fine portraits. The large chimney-piece of the dining-room is carved in Fiesole stone by Attilio Giustini, and was the prize work at a late exhibition of local art in Florence.

In a little oratory on the ground floor there is a fine copy of Giovanni Bellini's exquisite Madonna in the Church of the Frari at Venice. But we have left till last the mention of a picture which is very interesting. It is a Madonna kneeling in adoration of the divine Babe. Behind it is written "Alessio Baldovinetti pinse." There is a second inscription on the back placed there by a descendant of Baldovinetti, saying that he had bought the picture for ten *rusponi*,

in order to have a memorial of his ancestor in the house, but that having well studied the picture, he held it rather to be the work of Domenico Ghirlandaio, who was the favorite scholar of Baldovinetti.

The rooms in the first floor open on the large terrace above the portico, and anything more enchanting than the view from this balcony or from the arches of the loggia of the tower can scarcely be imagined. There exists in the Villa a certain old painting of the environs of Florence taken from this side of the house in the time of the Tolomei by Giuseppe Medici (1806), which it is very interesting to compare with the present scene, and trace the changes. Vincigliata, on the left, was then a ruin on a bare hill, now it is a perfect Castle, surmounting a mass of forest.

Of all the villas depicted therein, very few remain in the same hands, and most of them are modernized in form. All the most historical ones seem to be now in the possession of Englishmen, Mr. Leader owning those of the Pazzi, Tolomei and Salviati etc.; Mr. Spence the famous Medici Villa; Lady Crawford Villa Palmieri; and Mr. Ross Poggio Gherardi.

The gardens of the Villa Leader are charming: a wide lawn and immense terrace to the south, with palms, magnolias and orange flowers, with here a fish pond, and there a swimming bath. It was on entering this delightful terrace that the late Emperor Frederick

when Crown Prince of Germany exclaimed emphatically: "What good air! Oh! what a beautiful view, and what a pleasant place to live in!" and the Princess was equally enthusiastic. From this a shrubbery full of arbutus and myrtle leads by many a winding path down into the valley where the Mensola rushes over the rocks in the gorge, and forms the great swimming bath deep among the cliffs (see page 150).

In the shrubbery on the north side of the house is a private chapel which Mr. Leader caused to be built for his wife's use by the architect Signor Giuseppe Fancelli, the restorer of Vincigliata. The chapel was begun in August 1863, and being completed by the following spring, was consecrated by the Vicar-general of the diocese of Fiesole on May 23<sup>th</sup> 1864. On the following day — the fête of the SS. Vergine in Auxilium Christianorum — the inauguration of the chapel for public worship took place. High mass was solemnized by the Rev. Canon and Marquis Luca Medici, and eight other priests with a full orchestra composed of chosen professors from Florence. It was quite a festal day at the Villa and the little church was crowded.

The chapel consists of a single nave, the walls of which are divided by pilasters of *scagliola* with composite capitals. The roof and ornamentations are of *stucco* gilded and painted by the artist Enrico Andreotti. The painting behind the altar of the "Vergine

in Auxilium Christianorum" with St. John Baptist and St. Luigi Gonzaga, is by Annibale Gatti. The altar, on which is a relic of the Holy Cross, is of different coloured marbles, and the "Ciborium" of American lapislazuli. There are three good painted windows by Ulisse de Matteis: one contains a Madonna and Child, and the other two the arms of Mrs. and Mr. Leader. The fresco on the ceiling is by Gatti.

Within the grounds of the Villa Leader is yet another charming house, the late

### VILLA CATANZARO

with its graceful loggia, which is now the summer retreat of the Count Arnaldi and his wife, Mrs. Leader's daughter.

Like all this group of houses, it is also full of interesting reminiscences. It once belonged to the Valori family, and was the home of that Francesco Valori who took such a prominent part in the rebellion against the Medici (*cacciata dei Medici*) in 1493-94.

He it was who was carried in triumph into the Palazzo Vecchio on the shoulders of his partisans on November 9<sup>th</sup> when Piero de' Medici and his brother Cardinal Giuliano had to fly from the enraged populace disguised as monks. He it was who supported Savonarola as ruler of the Republic in the name of Christ,

and who in 1497 was himself Gonfaloniere. He fought fiercely for Savonarola against the besiegers of the Convent of San Marco on that stormy night when Fra Girolamo and Fra Domenico were unresistingly dragged away to their death; and after this brave but useless resistance Francesco himself was murdered in the streets of Florence by the friends of two rebels whom he had, while in office, condemned to death, and his wife, drawn to the window by the noise in the street was at the same time killed by a cross-bowman. Francesco's descendant Baccio Valori shared much the same fate in 1513, when he took part in another conspiracy against the Medici and was exiled, together with Filippo Strozzi. They got some partisans together at Montemurlo, but were made prisoners by Vitelli who conducted them to Florence like captives in a triumph, and they who had been as princes, had to ride through the streets on sorry nags with other rebels. Baccio was taken to the Bargello whence he was only brought out to be executed in the *piazza*. His estates were confiscated by the Ducal chamber, and not till March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1547 was this Villa given by the Grand Duke Cosimo to his secretary Lorenzo Pagni de' Bordoni of Pescia, in reward for his services. He, being delighted with its site, determined to rebuild the house, which he did in 1552 in its present style with loggia and turret. At the end of the loggia is a fountain, over which is the shield of Bordone —

a lion rampant holding a pilgrim's staff—and the following inscription:

LAURENTIUS BORDONIUS EX HONESTA  
PAGNORUM PISCIAE FAMILIA A SECRE  
TIS COSMI MED. FLOR. DUCIS II CUIUS  
MUNERE HOC ACTUS EST AGELLO  
COELI TEMPERIE LOCIQ: AMOENITA  
TE DUCTUS HANC VILLULAM ANIMI  
GRATIA SIBI NEPOTIBUSQ. CONQ.  
CONSTRUXIT AN. MDLII.

In 1567 Lorenzo gave this Villa to endow a "commenda," in the order of St. Stephen, of which he made his nephew Michelangelo di M. Girolamo Orlandi the patron.

Then in 1643 Giovanni Monzecchi, Gonfaloniere of the Golden Lion, bought the house, but in 1717 it passed into possession of the nuns of the adjoining convent of San Martino, who retained it till their suppression in 1808, when it fell again into the hands of the government, till in May 1816 Doctor Carlo di Mariano Catanzaro bought it, and adding an upper story left also his record on its walls:

AMOENITATE DUCTUS  
CONSTRUXIT L. BORDONIUS A. MDLII  
RESTAURAVIT ORNAVITQUE  
C. CATANZARO I. C. A. MDCCXXXIII  
UT FORO PROCUL CUM PROLE ET UXORE DILECTA  
ANIMO RELAXARET.

It passed into Mr. Leader's possession on April 8<sup>th</sup> 1862.

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## LA FORNACE.

The houses of the peasants on this estate are not much less interesting than the villas; one of them, *La Fornace*, was the home of an Englishman, Lord Charles Dudley son of Robert the second Duke of Northumberland (see page 62-3). Long before Dudley's time the house was the dwelling of another and more fortunate branch of the Valori family, and belonged to Filippo son of Bartolomeo Valori, the sturdy old Florentine who defied Ladislaus King of Naples, and who was sent as an ambassador to Pope Martin V at Constance. He travelled in grand state with two *attachés*, one of whom was Filippo Rinuccini, and a suite of sixty-two horsemen, besides twelve sumpter mules.

In 1417 Valori was one of the rulers of the state, and the family never lost their prestige, till the unfortunate disputes with the Medici, of which we have spoken. Through the successive hands of the Bartoli, Carosi and Minerbettini families, the *Fornace* passed in 1640 to the Countess Luisa Fabroni who left it as a heritage to her kinswoman Countess Maddalena Fabroni the wife of Charles Dudley, whose family had by this time quite taken root in Florence and become italianized. Her son and heir was Antonio, a canon of St. Peter's

of Rome, but he was not allowed to take peaceable possession, for the Fabroni disputed his right to the family possession; and an arbiter in the person of Ottaviano Vasoli was in 1716 called in to arrange matters, which he did by decreeing two thirds of the property to father Antonio Dudley, and one third to Leonardo Fabroni. As they did not choose to enjoy the estate together, they both agreed to privately sell their rights to two brothers, Gaspero and Pier Francesco Mormorai. The Dudleys had many ties in Italy, they were connected by marriage with the Appiani, Princes of Piombino; with the Malaspina's of Lunigiana, Marquises of Olivola; with the Dukes of La Cornia, the Counts of Carpegna, the Fieschi's, Marquises of Lavagna, and also with the Paleotti, a noble Bolognese family, one of whom became the wife of the famous Duke of Shrewsbury, while her brother Marchese Paleotti was hanged at Tyburn for the murder of his servant. What strange contrasts and vicissitudes there are in families!

From the Dudleys the *Fornace* passed through another line of purchasers, till it finally came into Mr. Leader's possession on May 5<sup>th</sup> 1852 and now forms part of the picturesque group of houses belonging to him at Maiano.

Nearer Vincigliata is another group of interesting houses, which are now inhabited by peasants, but were

formerly villas in the occupation of the Alessandri and other former Lords of the Castle. One of these still retains its ancient name of

### CAREGGI,

and it stands a little off the road beneath the Castle on the east. In the time of the Usimbardi it was a country hostel, with a bakehouse and butcher's shambles attached, and was known as "la Querciola." It passed into possession of the Alessandri-Albizzi with the rest of the domain in 1345. They retained it until December 10<sup>th</sup> 1547, when Giovanni Antonio Alessandri sold it to Riccardo Del Pace, who seems to have married into the family, for on his death it was left to his widow the Countess Baldinaccio, daughter of Bernardo Alessandri. She disposed of it, in 1562, to Angelo Del Mancino Sostegni, whose son Niccolò ceded it in his turn to a merchant of Florence named Alfonso Benzi on October 31<sup>st</sup> 1584.

In the next deed of sale, the house is first described as a *casa da signore* (gentleman's residence). This is an act of notary, drawn up by Ser Filippo Bottigli, and records the sale of the Villa and *podere* to Baccio d' Ulivieri Malespina, a music master; the Villa is here called *Romituzzo* instead of *Careggi* as

before, and we may conclude that it was rebuilt and newly named by either the Alessandri or the Sostegni. However the new name disappeared again, and as Careggi it has stood ever since.

Through the hands of two other successive purchasers, it came more permanently into possession of the Lasagnini family; Pier Filippo son of Bartolomeo Lasagnini having bought it on September 5<sup>th</sup> 1600. The Lasagnini were a neighbouring family, originally from the parish of San Martino a Mensola, which place we have mentioned; they established themselves in Florence in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and were entered in the *Arte dei Muratori* (builders' company), where the purchaser of Careggi became head of the company, was made a noble, and buried with aristocratic honors in the Church of Santa Maria Novella.

His brother Lorenzo attained eminence in the church and founded two chapelries, one in San Pier Maggiore and another in San Donato dei Vecchietti.

Pier Filippo Lasagnini had great social, as well as business qualities, and was one of the most prominent members of that interesting literary circle which Salvator Rosa presided over in Florence about 1648-58. That satiric genius had been obliged to fly from Naples after being embroiled in the insurrection of Masaniello; — he went to Rome where he had lived before,

and while there he met Cardinal Giovanni Carlo de' Medici, son of the Grand Duke Cosimo II, who brought him to Florence to paint the masterpieces which now adorn the galleries here.

His caustic wit delighted the Florentine *literati*, and his house near the "Croce al Trebbio" (afterwards the Palazzo Buontalenti) became a kind of literary reunion, where a witty circle met frequently, and amused each other with recitations. The learned Pier Filippo Lasagnini was a prominent member of the coterie, and when in course of time the friends, taking the name of *dei Percossi*, formed themselves into a regular academy for dramatic recitations and improvisations, his family assisted greatly.

The comedies were usually written by Salvator Rosa himself, and sometimes when they proved especially good, the company was invited to recite them at the *Casino di San Marco*, before the Cardinal de' Medici who then lived there. The parts of the women were taken by Lasagnini's young nephew, "a youth of high intelligence," and by a friend of his, Giovan Filippo Marucelli.

This young Marucelli afterwards became an *abate*, and, having literary tastes, amassed a library of 55,000 volumes of which he made a *Catalogue raisonné* entitled *Mare Magnum*, written by his own hand and filling 112 volumes. On his death, in 1703, he left this va-

luable collection to the city of Florence, and it now forms the Marucellian library in Via Cavour.

The boyish comradeship appears to have become lasting, for when these young actors of maiden characters were both elderly men, the Abate Francesco and his brother the senator purchased, in 1693, the Castel del Poggio, near the Villa of his friend Lasagnini at Careggi.

Lasagnini delighted in this country Villa. He improved and adorned it, and added an oratory with an altar, in which he placed a fine painting, representing St. Bartholomew and St. Nicolò di Bari. An inscription is still legible over the door of the chapel, where the arms of the family surmount the following lines :

D. O. M.

DIVISQ. BARTHOLOMEO ET NICOLAO BARENSI  
SACELLUM HOC BARTHOLOMEUS LASAGNINI  
SYNDICUS MAJOR SER<sup>mi</sup> ET REV<sup>mi</sup> PRINCIPIS  
CARDINALIS FRANC<sup>i</sup> MAR<sup>ae</sup> MEDICES  
A FUNDAMENTIS EREXIT  
ANNO SAL. MDCCVI.

In 1723 a Florentine noble named Giovanni Micceri bequeathed his property and name to the Lasagnini, whose arms were after that date quartered with his own. The family became extinct in Eleonora Lasagnini-Micceri who married into the Minucci family.

The ancient registers of the parish of Vincigliata entitled *Stato delle Anime* contain in their pages a concise story of the decay of both Castel del Poggio and Careggi. In 1669 "Don Francesco de' Lasagnini aged 30" is chronicled as inhabiting the Villa. His name duly appears every year till 1672. Then in 1729 a Signor Bartolommeo Lasagnini is mentioned, and in 1758 the register says: "No one lives in the Villa of Signor Bartolommeo Lasagnini, but one of his *contadini* has the charge of it." After 1761 it is mentioned no more.

The Abate Marucelli's Castel del Poggio shares a similar fate. In 1729 it is chronicled as the "Villa di Castello dell' Illustrissimo Signor Marucelli." In 1754-57 no one lives there, but the priest goes to give holy water, at Easter, and gets a fee of a dozen eggs from the *contadino*; but in 1764 the *Fattore* is in charge, and the priest writes: "At the Villa of Castel di Poggio the *Fattore* has not liked me to give the holy water for two years past, and I shall not go." So the Castle of Vincigliata and all the parish decayed till Mr. Leader purchased the whole domain.

### VILLA PERGOLATA,

on the southern slope of Poggio alla Croce, near some ancient stone quarries, was at one time in the possession of the Alessandri; but in the beginning of this century was the home of an English lady, Joanna Clare, widow of Mr. Woodburne-Annesley. — She improved the surroundings of her elevated home, by making a maze of winding paths in the wood on the hill side, thus turning it into a shrubbery. Among the objects in the house, when bought by its present possessor, was a likeness of this young Englishwoman, shewing her to have had a charming face and figure. She is represented with long fair hair falling over her shoulders, and is holding a guitar, thus displaying a well formed hand and arm. The portrait, which is in "pastel," and well preserved, is now at Maiano.

Another interesting Villa and farm house is

### MEZZANA

which lies between Castel di Poggio and Vincigliata. This too was a Villa of the Alessandri, who in 1349 bought it of the feudal Lord of Castel di Poggio, one of the terrible Del Manzecca. They retained it till January 16<sup>th</sup> 1609, when they ceded it to Francesco

Nacci as part of the wedding portion of a daughter of the house, Maria degli Alessandri. Her son Giuliano sold it, and through two other purchasers it came in 1657 into the possession of Vincenzo Assirelli who rebuilt the Villa.

His son Piero, uniting the *poderi* with those of Mandorle and Mulinaccio, endowed in 1673 the "commenda Assirelli" which he had founded in the order of St. Stephen. In later days his descendants obtained the permission of the Grand Master of the order to transfer the value of the lands into Funds equivalent to their value, and then ceded them to the nuns of the order of the Conception. But when in 1808 the religious orders were suppressed, the lands lapsed to the *demesne*, and were used to help in endowing the Legion of Honor. Again they passed into religious hands when on the rechristianization of devout corporations in 1817 they were put into possession of the convent of Santa Maria Novella of Florence. The convent being a second time suppressed, they once more lapsed to the *demesne* in 1866, and finally were bought by Mr. Leader in the following year. Thus through various vicissitudes in the alternate power of chivalry and ecclesiasticism, the lands of the Usimbardi and Alessandri have after many centuries become again united under one rule.

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## FIESOLAN VINEYARDS.

This morning our explorations on Mr. Leader's estate lead us further afield, as we have to visit some of the twenty-six *poderi*, which have an especial interest, either archæological or historical. Our good guide, the wood-ranger, meets us on the Piazza of Fiesole and we follow him round the little Municipal Hall with its many memorials of country prefects, and up a steep lane between the backs of villas, circling the hill till we reach a long piece of the Etruscan wall at the very highest point. Here just without the wall and probably partly built of its ancient stones is the

## PODERE DI SBOLGI, I MAZZI,

a picturesque group of cottages and a quaint archway perched on the crest of the hill above Maiano, and facing Vincigliata. This is the highest point of the Fiesolan hill: from here Mr. Leader's *poderi* one beneath the other stretch down the side of the hill towards Maiano, and here his corn, vines and olives ripen under the hot southern sun, as those of the Etruscans and Romans did in ages gone by. One can scarcely move a step without being reminded of these ancient peoples.

The great stones of the wall, still clinging to each other in timeless strength, recall that mysterious nation of builders and tomb-makers ; and as we are thinking of them, the swarthy *contadino*, whose very face is of a classical type, tells us that just by the wall two Roman (?) skeletons were found in rude stone coffins. Then he takes us to a field about which he has a wonderful story to tell. "In the days of my father," he says, "when they first began to plough this field hundred of skeletons were found, they were quite entire, and each one lying on large slabs of stone, with other stones placed gable-wise over them — large slabs, so that three on each side rested slanting against each other and covered the whole man."

"And were the skeletons preserved ?" we enquired.

"No signora, for no sooner had the fresh air blown upon them, than they began to crumble away, and the bones sank down one by one till in an hour or two nothing remained but dust."

Mr. Leader himself corroborates this. "The two bodies were found on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1856," he writes, "I remember one of a middle-aged man of great size, his grave was 7 feet 7 inches in length, it was roughly cut out of the rock a little below the surface, and formed of large tiles roofed over. In this tomb was a fibula, and an archaic little bronze idol. There was another of a young man with his teeth perfect and

white, and a collar of beads; his grave was a foot shorter than the other. They were probably barbarians killed in the fight close to Fiesole in the time of Stilicho. That is a mere guess."

It is a very good guess, though for the mode of burial is decidedly more Teutonic than Latin. The fibula also bears witness, for it is decidedly of Gothic form and workmanship, unlike the fibulæ of the Latin races. The head of it is flattened into a sunlike disk with rays, the shank also flattened into form is set in the raised Lombard fashion with four uncut amethysts and has a scroll engraved in the surface; there are numbers of fibulæ of the same form in the museum of Mayence.

The idol is a primitive female head and body, ending in a kind of serpent's head, all the remains are of the fourth century after Christ.

The beads found in the young man's grave are of amber very much calcined, and blue Roman glass. The young Goth had probably acquired them in his Italian marches, or taken them from the neck of a Roman foe. It was in October 8<sup>th</sup> 405, that Radagaisus the Goth led a great and mixed army of barbarians up this hill having fought his way from the Alps down the length of Italy to Fiesole. They were encamped here when Stilicho marched up from Florence against them, and after a fierce fight on

that stony ground, overcame Radagaisus with great slaughter.

The inhabitants of Fiesole and its new colony Florence had lately become converts to Christianity, and as this victory chanced to take place on the fête of Santa Reparata, it was looked on as miraculous, and the anniversary was kept with great honors. Moreover the Florentines, who had not long since turned their Temple to Fortune on the Campus Martius into a Christian Church, dedicated it anew to Santa Reparata, and so we may say that the history of the Duomo began in this ancient battle field, and that the skeletons of those unknown barbarians in Mr. Leader's *podere* formed the first link in the story.

It is true that other armies besides the Goths of Radagaisus have marched across this hill; Hannibal led his tired but victorious troops from the victory on the Trebia by this route; and in the century next before Christ the city was twice laid waste by the Roman armies, the second being the vengeance of Sylla. The warriors of the field were not in these engagements, or they would have been found either in *tumuli* or funeral urns, so we will be content with our first hypothesis, and leaving this ancient battlefield follow our guide to the

## PODERE OF SANTINI OR THE LASTRONE.

The route lies along a rough mountainous path whose solid pavement, showing here and there, be-speaks it the old Etruscan road. On this brilliant November morning the landscape has an unique effect. We are rounding the rocky spurs of the mountain at a great height above the plain. The yellow cliffs on our right with their crowns of olives show rich and warm against the sapphire sky, and the precipice on the left below is so steep that at times we almost seem able to touch the tops of the cypresses in the gardens beneath us. Beyond those cypresses and Villa roofs all is blotted out from our gaze. The valley is a boundless sea of mist, in which the Duomo, with Giotto's and Arnolfo's towers shoot up isolated, like masts from a submerged ship, and the hills afar off loom through a white veil like distant islands. A rough descent brings us to the "Lastrone" where there is another remnant of antiquity, a subterranean tank like the one called the *Fonte Sotterra* in the Borg' Unto at Fiesole. The *contadino* brings out a lamp of Etruscan form and leads us down a cutting in the rock, where a few steps bring us to the level of a deep pool of water in what looks like an arched cave. There is no masonry however, and we find that the cavity hollowed out of the solid

rock, is probably nothing more than an ancient quarry, though I am not learned enough in the archæology of tools to tell by the work, whether the implements that cut it were in the hand of an Etruscan, Roman or Florentine artisan.

The *aja* (threshing-floor) of the *contadino's* house is an antique terrace before a large archway, leading to the house, and it commands an enchanting view of Val d'Arno. The house was once a Villetta belonging to the Salviati family, whose grander country house rises in square solidity a little below this hill, near the Badia.<sup>1</sup> That large house was partly destroyed by fire in the time of the siege of Florence, 1529-30, when a brigade of wild young men rushed about the country setting fire to all the most valuable things. This house of Mr. Leader's probably belonged to a less famous branch of the Salviati family, than that of the Cardinal-Legate Giovanni, or the Captain and Ambassador Jacopo, or that Maria Salviati wife of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, and mother of Cosimo the first Grand Duke, who in turns possessed the great square house near. The owner may have been Averardo son of Filippo Salviati, whose wife, "the magnificent Madonna Alexandra dei Neri," was a friend of her devout neighbours the

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<sup>1</sup> It is known as Mario and Grisi's Villa.

nuns of Maiano, and in 1574 gave them a beautiful chalice veil of silk embroidered with gold. Quite close to this *podere* is that of

### BON RIPOSO,

another descending scale of terraces covered with vines and olives, which are interspersed with beds of violets, and borders of chrysanthemums and pinks. At the end of these flowery terraces rises a new water-tower built by Mr. Leader, and forming a reservoir for the waters of a perennial spring just beneath the convent of the Doccia. From here the water is carried by iron pipes to supply Maiano.

We ascend the external steps and entering the tower stand on the gallery which surrounds it, and look down into the depth of water which the solid masonry contains.

" How much water is there here ? " we ask.

" About eight thousand barrels," replies our guide, " it is 20 feet deep."

In front of the tower on a lower level is a large tank for the use of the *podere*. The *contadino*'s house is a very antique building with large stone seats in front of the door, and a raised chimney corner in the kitchen which would contain quite a family party.

It was once a Villa belonging to the Orlandini family whose Palace in Florence used to do duty as the seat of the British Embassy in Italy.

In looking over the records of the Orlandini in Florentine history one regrets that they nearly all chronicle traitorous deeds. We will hope this house did not belong to Bartolommeo Orlandini whom Gino Capponi styles *vilissimo uomo* for having fled from his post as defender of the Castle of Marradi in 1440, allowing Visconti's general Piccinino to enter with his army, and thus giving them the key to Tuscany. In 1441 this same Bartolommeo being Gonfaloniere — for he was richer in honours than in honour — sent for a brave young captain of the Republic, named Baldaccio d' Anghiari, and kept him talking in the corridor of the Palazzo Vecchio till two assassins, paid and concealed by him, rushed out and killed Baldaccio. The young soldier's widow Annalena withdrew from a world which was so cruel to her, and turned her house in Via Romana known as the "casa Annalena" into a hospice and convent. Neither do we wish the house, to have belonged to another of the family, Piero Orlandini who, lounging in Florence with other young men at the time of the conclave in 1523, amused himself by betting a hundred *scudi* against the succession of Giulio dei Medici to the Papacy, and when he lost refused to pay; on which the "Otto" ordered

his head to be cut off. There was a yet worse Piero Orlandini in 1530 who followed the traditions of his family and betrayed Empoli to the Spaniards. With his accomplice Andrea Giugni, he had the unenviable notoriety of being painted in effigy among other traitors on the walls of the Bargello. The Orlandini were rich and powerful withal, and it was in their house in Florence that Pope John XXIII lodged after his deposition in 1415. But the sun is getting low, we must leave this historical hill so full of old memories, and descend again to our home in the plain, with thanks to Mr. Leader for letting us read, in his vineyards and houses, so many pages of the story of by-gone days, which he has enshrined within them.

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IN THE PIAZZA PITTI.



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## IN THE PIAZZA PITTI.

As our explorations in Mr. Temple-Leader's Castle and Villas have illustrated some phases of the feudal and country life of the Florentines of past ages, we may well conclude the circuit by taking the town house of the same proprietor, as an illustration of the civic life of the burgher of the Republic. The Florentine burgher had usually three possessions, the Castle which his forefathers of feudal times had handed down to him; the less ancient Villa which served, as in Messer Agnolo Pandolfini's time, for the health resort of the family in the summer, and the fountain of supply for household necessities from its cornfields and vineyards, olive plantations, orchard, and poultry yard,—and lastly the town “Palazzo” which was the central hearth of the *gens* (for the branches of one family often occupied whole streets of contiguous houses) thus giving the head of

the family a recognised standing in the city, and qualifying him for public office.

This clannishness of the Florentine burgher is emphasised by the number of streets which, to this day, retain the names of families, such as "Via dei Bardi," "Via dei Martelli," "Via dei Tornabuoni," etc., and is shown even now in the national patriarchal way of living,— the bridegroom always bringing his bride home to the paternal roof.

It will not be surprising then to find that Mr. Leader's town house, 14 Piazza de' Pitti, although distinct from the well known Palazzo Pitti, was nevertheless the abode of members of that family and name, closely related to the proud Luca Pitti.

The ancestry of the Pitti dated from a certain Bonsignore son of Tolomeo of Lucca, Lord of the grand old Castle of Semifonte (*Summus Fons*) in Val d'Elsa, of which we have quoted Napier's description (page 37). That typical fortress being destroyed in 1202, Bonsignore went on a pilgrimage to Palestine where he died, and Bonsignore the second, his son, came to Florence, where he took root and flourished so quickly that his son Matteo was elected prior in 1283. From this time till 1530, the Pitti held office as Priors 47 times, and thirteen of them acted as "Gonfalonieri di Giustizia," or supreme magistrates of the Republic. Bonaccorso, the 4<sup>th</sup> of the line, was

devoted to the Church, and built the hospital and monastery of Sant' Anna at Verzaia.

His son Neri married Corradina di Giovanni Strozzi, and through her sons Pietro, Luigi, Francesco and Bonaccorso the fame and fortune of the house rose to its highest point. We need only follow out the descendants of the eldest and youngest, for in the line of Pietro continued the possession of the Palazzo n. 14 — now Mr. Leader's; while in that of the youngest, the prosperity of the Pitti was destined to blaze forth with seeming fulgence, and as suddenly to be quenched for ever, a warning instance of unbridled ambition. Bonaccorso, the youngest of the four brothers, was much esteemed in the city, and won the chief posts in government, though he "suffered much from enemies." He was moreover an author, and in 1412 wrote a chronicle named *Cronaca di Bonaccorso Pitti*,<sup>1</sup> which was published by Giuseppe Manni in 1720, in a quarto volume. He also — when worried by the enemies above mentioned — wrote a *Canzone Satirica* in which the *animus* was more anger, than satire, and which certainly could not have appeased his enemies' wrath. Another of his poems was called *Rime de' due Buonaccorsi da Monte Magno*. His style was brilliant, but marred by the use

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<sup>1</sup> The original was till 1805 in the hands of Ser Andrea Pitti his lineal descendant.

of French phrases, he having lived some time in France. Of his three sons, Luca the youngest was by far the most eminent. He was sent as ambassador to Francesco Sforza in 1449, and fought in the war with King Alfonso of Naples in 1453. He formed a close friendship with Cosimo de' Medici, *Pater Patriæ*, by whom he was knighted with great pomp in the Baptistry of Florence.

In 1458 he was elected "Gonfaloniere di Giustizia," but his overweening pride caused him to rule in such an overbearing manner that the Councils rebelled against him. However he filled the palace of the Signoria with armed men, and they were compelled to agree to his measures, and create a new *balia* composed of his partisans. This Council instituted quite a reign of terror, one of the first acts of which was to deprive Girolamo Machiavelli (grandfather of the famous Niccolò) and others of their honours, and throw them into prison.<sup>1</sup>

For eight years Luca carried on this species of tyranny in the name of Cosimo de' Medici, and such was his hold on Cosimo, who was now old and weakened in intellect, that he looked on Luca as a public benefactor, and loaded him with honours. Public processions were held in celebration of his knighthood, on

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<sup>1</sup> See MACHIAVELLI, *Istorie Fiorentine*, lib. VII, cap. 4.

which occasion Cosimo and the Signoria made him magnificent presents; Machiavelli says they amounted to the value of 20,000 ducats.

Being now at the pinnacle of his power and spurred to emulation by the fine palaces which Filippo Strozzi and the Medici were erecting, he began to build a great Villa at Ruciano about a mile from the city, and a town palace amidst his family houses, which he declared "should be large enough to hold the Palazzo Strozzi in its cortile."

The Doric basement of this great palace was rising fast, when Cosimo died, and Piero de' Medici reigned in his stead. Now Piero was "a Pharoah who knew not Joseph;" he was no friend of Luca but favoured Diotisalvi Neroni his rival. Two factions were therefore formed which ere long came to arms. Luca held his own and Neroni's party fled, but Luca — who had obtained his ends so unscrupulously, and whose underhand practices were exposed by his enemies — lost both honour and prestige, and sunk low in public opinion. Machiavelli says: "No instance was more notable in this change of affairs than that of Messer Luca Pitti, who soon found the difference between victory and defeat, honour and dishonour. A deep solitude brooded over his houses, which had been so frequented by citizens. His friends and kinsmen not only forbore to accompany him in the streets, but were

afraid even to salute him lest they should share his fall, for some of them had already lost their civic honours, and others their prosperity on his account. The superb edifices which he had begun were abandoned by the builders, his privileges were turned into injuries, his houses were disgraced." Luca died in 1472, despised and hating his life. His unfinished palace was bought for 900 florins by Cosimo I, for his wife Eleonora, and Ammannati was instituted architect for its completion.

Before beginning this ill-starred palace, Luca must have lived in the family home on the other side of the *Piazza*, probably at n. 14, where his father's elder brother Pietro had become the head of the house. Pietro too had become a magistrate, and was three times "Podestà" at Fifenati. Luca's ambition seems to have fired that of his family in general, for they began rebuilding the *Palazzo* (now n. 14) at the same time that the larger house was rising up opposite to it. It was likewise begun on a grand scale, with a Doric basement, and the original plan would have included seven arches of massive stones across the frontage. Luca's fall must have stopped the progress of this as well as of his own palace (Machiavelli distinctly speaks of houses in the plural), for the last arch and a half on the right are still unfinished. The works must have been abandoned, and in course of time the adjoining walls

built up against it, for the half arch in the lower façade remains now, though the building has been finished above it.

Luca's young cousin, Ginevra Lanfredini (Pietro's daughter), being heir to her father's property, became mother of Jacopo, who being a famous literary man, again rendered illustrious the name of Pitti, which he took by his grandfather's will. He was elected senator to the Grand Duke Cosimo in 1572, and sent ambassador to Pope Gregory VIII. Like his ancestor Buonaccorso, he also wrote a Florentine history, which is very valuable, as it takes just the time between the chronicles of Varchi and Segni (1494 to 1529).

His wife was Maddalena Gaddi, the daughter of Sinibaldo Gaddi, a man almost as influential as Luca Pitti himself. He was sent ambassador to Paul IV in 1555, and as he had lent a great deal of money to the State, he was in 1556 made officer of the "Monte" or public funds. He too married a Strozzi, so that in a distant manner Maddalena and Jacopo claimed cousinship.

Sinibaldo's brother Niccolò went to France as ambassador to Louis XI, on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1490, and he made such a good impression that the King wrote to Florence that he had retained him as Court Counselor, *Maestro delle richieste di Casa nostra*, and that he had the entire management of Italian affairs in France.

His nephew and namesake Niccolò Gaddi, Maddalena's brother, won a name as being the greatest artistic and literary collector of his time, excepting only the Medici family. He lived near San Lorenzo in a street which was called "the Paradise of the Gaddi." Here he had large gardens with fountains, statues, and rare plants, which laid the foundation of the *Orto botanico*, or Florentine botanical gardens; and here was a fine gallery of paintings, and a magnificent library of codices, which in later years were assorbed into the Laurentian library. Niccolò was very magnificent in his style of living, and when he was a marriage guest at the wedding of Donna Leonora de' Medici at Mantua, he made a splendid appearance with a number of servants in rich liveries, besides having handsome litters and carriages. It was through him that the owners of the *Palazzo* n. 14 were called Gaddi instead of Pitti, for his only legitimate son dying young, Niccolò after founding and endowing two hospitals, left his house and treasures, together with his name, to Camillo and Cosimo, sons of his sister Maddalena, wife of Jacopo Pitti. The date of this change of name is proved by two entries in a "Priorista" in the Marucellian library, where among the members of the "Council of 48"<sup>1</sup> we find

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<sup>1</sup> This Council was instituted in 1532, and was so arranged that four counselors went out, and other four were elected every month in rotation.

on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1605 the name of *Cosimo di Jacopo Pitti*, and in August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1615 that of his brother as *Camillo di Jacopo Pitti, Hoggi* (sic) *Gaddi* (now Gaddi).

Camillo and Cosimo divided the Gaddi-Pitti family into two branches. Camillo's son Jacopo Gaddi, who as eldest son would have lived in his grandfather Gaddi's *paradiso*, evidently profited by his classical surroundings, and became famous for his Latin odes and eulogies on famous men. He also wrote poems and historical works as well as the *Trattato Storico della Famiglia Gaddi* preserved in the Laurentian library; and from whose interesting pages these facts have been gathered. Segni writes of him *che il nostro Jacopo Gaddi, ai giovani che uscivano dalle scuole, predicava il buon gusto, e facesse loro per quanto gli era possibile disimparare il cattivo.* How well we can imagine him in his flowing red *lucco*, stopping to talk to the schoolboys in hose and jerkins, trying to interest their higher tastes, and giving them good maxims. His poems, "Silvæ and Carmine," were printed in Venice in 1655.

In 1748 his line became extinct in Sinibaldo, son of Pietro, who had been created Marchese by Gian Gastone.

Nor did the line of Cosimo who, it is presumed, inherited his father's house n. 14 Piazza Pitti, last much longer; it died out in 1796, Gaspero di Lorenzo di Gaetano being its latest member.

The great Gaddi collection must have been dispersed after Sinibaldo's death, for we find a wary monk, Padre Barone of Lucca, was in treaty with an Englishman, to sell for a large amount the collection which he intended to buy very cheaply from Gaspero, the last of the line, but Canon Bandini of the Laurentian library petitioned the Emperor Francis I, then master of Tuscany, that the purchase might be made for the public use, and the treasures kept in Tuscany. Accordingly on April 24<sup>th</sup> 1755 the government bought the codices; 355 of them were placed in the Laurentian library, and 727, with 1457 printed books (old editions) in the Magliabechian.

Thus in the old home of the Pitti died out the families of Pitti and Gaddi, for in the present century we find it in possession of the Lanfranchi, a Pisan family, whose name together with other Ghibellines is connected by Dante in the conspiracy of Count Ugolino at Pisa, and also in his betrayal and death by starvation in the "tower of hunger." One of the tenants of n. 14 was probably that Carlo Giuseppe di Rossi Lanfranchi, who wrote a *Cantata* for music, which was sung in honour of the arrival of Pietro Leopoldo of Austria in Florence, with Donna Maria Luisa of Spain, his bride.

The Lanfranchi remained in possession of the house till 1857; it was then purchased by Mr. Leader who

improved it for modern use, by adding an iron and glass gallery round part of the internal cortile, forming a kind of conservatory, on which the reception rooms open, he also placed a wide loggia on the roof which commands an enchanting view of Florence and the surrounding country.

The staircase of this house remains, as designed by the architect of the Pitti, a wide and handsome spiral staircase of stone with a massive central column ; the rooms have some 17<sup>th</sup> century frescoes, but there are few remains of art of earlier and purer style; there are however some good modern pictures, the property of the present owner. In the large drawing-room is a fine specimen of the work of Cavalier Annibale Gatti, who is descended from a long line of painters, the first of whom was pupil of Annibale Carracci at Bologna in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The painting which represents Galileo showing his telescope to Milton is remarkable for a masterly contrast in lights. Milton is in a lamp-lighted room looking through a telescope, while the moon shines on a group of young people on a terrace outside, and an old woman is going down stairs by the light of a lantern on the other side.

Another interesting picture is the portrait of Mr. Leader's old friend Trelawney, in the Greek dress which he wore after the Byron episode at Missolonghi, when

he espoused the cause of the chieftain Ulysses (or Odisseus), whose daughter he had married. It is a fine portrait, and the costume suits the determined face so well that it is not surprising an English Officer, who was brought into their camp as a prisoner, should have failed to recognise a fellow-countryman in the seeming chieftain. And what a determined character he had! what other man — after a wound such as he received from the English traitors in the eyrie cave on the crags of Mount Parnassus — what other man would have had the fortitude to sit in one position for forty days till nature had healed the wounds in breast and collar bone and jaw, which there was no surgeon to dress?

Whether the cause of Ulysses were just or not, Trelawney, having once embraced it, was faithful to death.

There are some charming portraits of the Leader family by Sir Thomas Lawrence's favorite pupil Harlow, in the room which contains Trelawney's likeness, besides two good Morlands, a painting by Peter Neefs, a beautiful sunset by Ruysdael, which was formerly in the collection of Lord Rendlesham; and six large miniature copies on ivory, of pictures in the Dresden gallery.

Nor is sculpture wanting. There is a copy in marble by Signor Calò of the Venus de' Medici and also two

marble busts of Mr. and Mrs. Leader by the late sculptor Fantacchiotti.

Two large ancient Japanese jars, with metal ornaments by Dubois of Paris adorn one table, while two beautiful Venetian flagons in bronze-gilt have been brought from the "Palazzo Vendramin" on the Grand Canal of Venice, and now have their place here amid some metal and inlaid caskets, and other curiosities. The large glass chandelier is also of Venetian manufacture from Murano.

The dining-room opens on the glass gallery, and against its cool green-hued walls a large sideboard, in carved walnut wood, stands out in good relief. The subjects of the carvings are figures and foliage, the work of Cavalier Luigi Frullini of Florence. On it stands a great ewer of artistic Russian work in bronze-gilt. The chief pictures in this room are a very expressive portrait of a Dutch civic dignitary by Van der Helst; — the portraits of two boys of the Albizi family in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; a portrait of Girolamo Priuli, Doge of Venice; two ovals, Flora and Pomona; and a large landscape by Pandolfi representing the Church and Convent of San Domenico at Siena with the famous Fonte Branda, of Dantesque memory, just beneath them. These three last mentioned pictures were in the old Palazzo Pazzi — where the Italian Bank now stands. There is a wonderfully

well preserved rural landscape with figures and cattle by Reinagle, and full-length portraits of Ferdinand I, and Cosimo II Grand Dukes of Tuscany.

The "blue room" has its walls frescoed, and contains an elegant little marble statuette of Elena Varesi — a distinguished actress and charming singer. — This statuette by Ximenes was bought by Mr. Leader at the Duke of Dino's sale.

The red ball-room is lighted by a great Venetian chandelier from Murano, and contains a good portrait of Mrs. Leader by Gasser.

A Madonna by Sassoferato hangs in the yellow bed-chamber, and near it is an ancient holy-water *pila*, with a "holy family" in silver-gilt and lapislazuli; and a 17<sup>th</sup> century Danish cabinet inlaid in ebony and ivory, representing scenes of the chase.

N. 13, the corner house adjoining this one, also belongs to the same owner, and was anciently one of the houses of the Pitti family, probably that of Vincenzo Pitti, a senator in the time of Cosimo II.

The prestige of the old name seems to have revived in this later and distant cousin of Luca Pitti, for he held many State offices with honour, was known as just and prudent in government; and *nell'universale acclamazione* was called the "father of the poor." He died on February 25<sup>th</sup> 1631, and was buried in the neighbouring Church of Santa Felicita. From the

extinction of the Pitti family, this house n. 13 belonged to the Fantoni, from whom Mr. Leader purchased it.

Some of the Fantoni were also poets; a worthy lawyer named Luca Fantoni (probably the purchaser of the house from Vincenzo's descendants) recited a funeral oration in the *Accademia degli Svolgiani*, on All Soul's day 1646, on the death of Alessandro, son of that same Vincenzo Pitti.

Another Count Giovanni Fantoni wrote a funeral elegy for the Empress Maria Teresa of Austria, and a third and later occupant, Giovanni Fantoni — known as the Tuscan Horace — was very much esteemed in his own day, although on looking back at his works, we recognise that for all his fame during life he was only a *poète de société*, an affected imitator of the classic poets. He was member of "Arcadia;" that literary club which is still lingering on in Rome, the peculiarity of which is that its members assume a fantastic poetical name. Giovanni Fantoni's Arcadian name was "Labindo," and under this appellation he put forth odes and anacreontics by the dozen, many of which were collected and published at Pisa in 1819 by Niccolò Caprero.

The odes are all addressed to friends; it seems to have been Labindo's custom to follow the Roman usage of distributing verses to his acquaintance. His style

is ostentatiously formed on that of Horace, he writes sentimental poems to Phillis (Filli), Lesbia, Nice, etc. with sometimes a satire on woman's frailty and vanity. A poem to an elderly lady who apes youth, and an anacreontic to an old woman, read like paraphrases of Horace; as does a "satire on a certain Ranieri Cal-sabigi di Livorno," who hopes to obtain a pension from a minister by dedicating a poem to him. However, though the star of Labindo has faded now, it shone resplendent in his own generation. A brother poet, Vincenzo Corazza of Bologna, wrote an ode which after comparing him to Phœbus, to the swan of Dirce, etc. continues :

Tocca, Labindo, tu quella tua lira  
Che dopo il Vate di Venosa niuna  
Mano mortale di toccar fu ardita;  
Toccala e canta.

(Touch thy lyre oh! Labindo, that lyre whose strings no mortal hand has dared to sweep since the Seer of Venosa (Horace); touch it and sing!)

Although the direct line of Pitti is extinct, it is interesting to know that a lateral descendant, Sig. Pitti-Laparelli, is still living in n. 12, one of the ancient homesteads of the family.

There is plenty of historical interest attached to an old house in Florence, and this may be said not

only of these two on Piazza Pitti, but of nearly any house or palace in the city. The very stones cry out the story of the past, and the rooms we live in could tell many a romantic episode. The new Florence arising in the nineteenth century will be less eloquent and less lasting.

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## APPENDIX.



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VINCIGLIATA CASTLE  
A QUATTROCENTO LEGEND  
FROM THE ITALIAN OF  
Cav. GUIDO CAROCCI.

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I.

Ten or twelve years ago, some ruins all covered with ivy and wild foliage, stood on the bare crest of a hill, a little detached from Monte Ceceri. A few crumbling walls, the remains of a fortress gate, and ancient loggia, some rooms with their roofs half destroyed, and the corbels which once sustained the ruined battlements, were all that remained of the ancient Castle, which the neglect of man and vicissitudes of time had little by little reduced to a mass of ruins.

Yet those ruins were so picturesque and showed a pile so pleasing, and at the same time simple and elegant, that one felt regret in seeing them continually crumbling away. How many artists have lingered to gaze upon and sketch them! How many passionate admirers of the antique have attentively examined each wall and sculpture, and scanned

every trace which could speak of the ancient state of the Castle or its history!

A few steps distant there stood some huts, built mostly of the stones of the fallen Castle, and a little church with an ancient bell-tower. — This was the village of Vincigliata. None of its inhabitants had a word to say about those remains which they called the "old tumble-down palace (*palazzaccio*) of the Alessandri." At the most they could only have told us some vague ghost story of the unquiet spirits which wandered sighing beneath the dark vaults.

In fact one of those curious and enthusiastic archaeologists was constrained to give himself up to his own thoughts, which in the poetic melancholy inspired by the silence and the ruins, carried him into who knows what past ages. And yet the Castle ought to have some history, some tradition, or memory, and not be wholly condemned to oblivion! A veil of mystery which no one had ever taken the trouble to penetrate, seemed to envelop those ruins, forgotten and abandoned by all.

One morning in August, about three or four years ago, under a sun fierce enough to scorch the very stones, two persons trod a stony path which descended from the quarries of Fiesole, and wound their way through the valley of the Mensola, under the hill of Vincigliata. The travellers who thus defied the power of "Sol Leone" (the dog days) were two artists, — or rather one was a famous landscape painter, the other — myself — but a simple amateur who now and then took the brush in hand.

On the hill before us, a medieval Castle rose so majesti-

cally, that it seemed as though neither ages nor winter storms had been able to injure it. That Castle was Vincigliata which we have represented as being a heap of ruins only ten years ago.

Those picturesque remains had not then been condemned to perish uncared for. A rich gentleman, English by birth, but Italian in opinions and ideas, had seen the place and been inspired to restore the Castle, and now Vincigliata towers superb and majestic as in the days of its ancient grandeur.

The two wayfarers having reached a place where the path, capriciously following the course of the torrent, was deliciously shaded by some *ilexes*, paused to contemplate a superb point of view, and to ask an old man who was seated on a rock the shortest road to Vincigliata.

"From here," the old man said, "you only have to follow the path to the top of the hill — it is a little difficult, but you are young and will not mind that."

He had answered our first question so courteously that I was induced to ask another, were it only to see whether he had anything to tell us respecting the place.

"Do you live near here?" I asked.

"My home was once on this hill, but now I live here no longer. Before Vincigliata was rebuilt this spot was deserted, or nearly so, and the sparse grass which grew among the stones, served to feed my sheep while I was sheltered from the sun and rain beneath the vaults of the Castle. I was safe and undisturbed there, for none of the neighbours dared to enter, lest they should see the spirits."

"And were not you afraid of the spirits?"

He laughed and replied: "I must confess that in a score of years I never heard anything more than the wind whistling through the windows, and have seen nothing more alarming than the pretty effects of light when a moonbeam shone down through the cracks in the roof."

I have always had a special delight in asking old people about the places they live in, hoping that some day or other I might chance to hear some peasant tradition which has come down to us through who knows how many generations.

This time we were beginning well — the old man had a fluent tongue, and already let out that he knew something, consequently there was nothing to do but to seat ourselves here and draw out our friend. That was precisely what I did, while Ferruccio (such was my companion's name) took out block and paint-brush and began to sketch a "bit," where the Mensola falls over some rocks with a lovely effect.

"Did you say that the people about here believe that there is a ghost in the ruins of the Castle?"

"They might not all believe that, but the fact remains that they never dare to enter the vaults. Only some very old people know anything about it, but I have heard my father tell how sighs were once heard among the ruins, and at night the figure of Madonna Bianca has been seen wandering under the arches."

"Who was this Madonna Bianca?" I interrupted,

"Eh, *signor mio*, that would be a long story to tell."

" Yet if it will not trouble you...."

" Oh ! not in the least."

And the old man forthwith narrated in all its particulars the legend which has served as material for my story.

## II.

Ah ! how lovely she was ! Seventeen years of age, with a face full of life and expression, a trim and lithe little figure, unusual spirit, and bewitching affability.

It might be said that no one in Florence could help his heart beating more quickly on receiving a glance or a fleeting smile from Bianca Usimbardi. When she walked out leaning on the arm of a maid, or perhaps on that of her father, every eye was drawn towards her, every glance lingered upon her, but with that respect which beings above humanity inspire. In the gay reunions of young men and noble maidens, who met on summer evenings under some *loggia*,<sup>1</sup> or gathered in the country to celebrate May-day festivities,<sup>2</sup> she was always the queen of the fête, and the

<sup>1</sup> From ancient times the most powerful families of the city had a colonnade or *loggia* beneath or near their houses, which formed a place of meeting for guests, and was sheltered from sun and rain.

The evenings were generally spent with friends under the loggia. The best specimens to be seen at the present day, are the loggia of the Palazzo Rucellai, opposite their palace in Via della Vigna Nuova ; and that at the corner of the Palazzo Corsi now Alinari's shop. This formerly stood at the other end of the palace. Several of the older loggie have been bricked up and turned into shops and offices.

<sup>2</sup> May-day or *Calendimaggio* was kept by much social feasting. The young people celebrated rural fêtes on that day, wore garlands of flowers and sang May-day songs.

young men vied with each other who should speak with her, or press her pretty hand, or obtain a rare smile.

Many scions of the richest and most splendid families had called on Messer Giovanni Usimbardi to ask Bianca's hand in marriage, but their quests had always been fruitless.

At seventeen when the world in its true aspect is opening before a young girl, then all her deeper feelings begin to take life.... Bianca had as yet known no love but that of her father, mother and brother. Monna Tessa, her mother, who had for some time been an invalid, very rarely saw her daughter, for she had left Florence to go and breathe the pure air of the Mugello, on an estate belonging to her father, who was one of the Domenichi family.

The rather severe education which Bianca had received from her father, and the simple life led by the Usimbardi family had prevented her from forming much acquaintance with the world.

Yet she felt within herself a certain void, she knew that something was lacking, and had begun to suspect that besides family affection it was necessary to concentrate her love on some other person.

But notwithstanding these ideas and the numberless suitors who presented themselves as soon as she entered society, she found no man worthy of her affection. She observed that the young men were either too fond of jesting indiscriminately with women in general, and were too ambitious, or else devoted to arms and contests, and not such as worthily to sustain the responsibilities of a family.

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"Oh! Madonna," exclaimed a maid-servant one day entering the room where Bianca was seated at work, "something dreadful must have happened!"

"Why Berta?" asked the girl with interest.

"Why! — because on returning from the Piazza de' Signori I saw a great coming and going of people, and certain faces fierce enough to frighten one.... I believe news must have come from the army."

"From the army? Perhaps Castruccio — tell me, where is my father?"

"*Messere* has not yet returned."

"Do you know where he went?"

"I think he went to the Loggia of the Elisei."<sup>1</sup>

"May God be merciful to him! but he — blessed man that he is — might have stayed away. He knows well enough that that place is not liked by the populace, and that every evening some disputes arise there, caused by certain men who seem to live on quarrels, and who would do much better to take arms for the country, which has so much need of them."

At that moment an unusual noise of footsteps and clash of swords caused the two women to rush to the window which gave on a little street leading to the church of San Romeo.

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<sup>1</sup> The Loggia of the Elisei family (connections of the Alighieri) was facing the church of Santa Margherita on Piazza de' Donati in the old market. By an ancient concession this loggia was a kind of city of refuge, for the Podestà and Esecutore could not arrest a criminal who had sought its shelter.

The sun had already set, and in the obscurity Bianca was only just able to distinguish a man who with sword in hand attempted to overtake another wrapped in a cloak who was running in the direction of the Piazza della Signoria. But at that moment the person who was being pursued stumbled, fell, and began to cry: "Help! Help!"

That voice rang sorrowfully in the breast of Bianca; she knew too well what it meant, and did not hesitate to take action immediately. A moment later and followed by the maid and a serving man, who had heard the cry, Bianca was already in the street kneeling beside the fallen one who was bleeding profusely from a wound in the breast.

The girl gazed an instant on the wounded man, then gave a cry and fell fainting on the pavement.

The man was her father!

### III.

Those were sad times for Florence!

The factions of the Bianchi and Neri, though apparently extinct, continued to smoulder here and there beneath the surface, and from time to time put forth fierce flames. The remembrance of reciprocal hatred, of feuds, murders, and slaughters committed in the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century was still too new for people to succeed in forgetting it all at once. There were always rancours between one family and another: those who had taken one side in a faction looked askance at others who had fought under the opposite flag, and would not have scrupled to begin fighting again

on the first occasion that presented itself. Thus every one lived in suspicion, and all feared lest the streets of Florence should again become the field of civic war.

Add to these unenviable conditions that Castruccio Castracane degli Antelminelli with his Lucchese bands devastated the territory of the Republic with a bitter war, in which the Florentine military forces more than once had to succumb to the overpowering strength of the enemy.

This was the sad state in which Florence found herself at the time of our story — that is in 1325.

Giovanni Usimbardi<sup>1</sup> was one of those men who, without abandoning the customs of their own modest life, know how to inspire in others that faith and respect which is due to talent and culture. A friend of Dante Alighieri, Cavalcanti, Forese Donati and many other illustrious citizens of the time, he had participated in their studies, ideas, and a little even in their political opinions. However Usimbardi had never chosen to irrevocably launch himself in either of the parties which divided the city.

He perceived that contests only tended to the ruin of one's own country, and to encourage ambitious ideas in neighbouring states. And yet as men always look more to appearances than to facts, the enemies of the Alighieri, having seen him with Dante, held that he belonged to the Bianchi faction, and if in 1301 he was not exiled with Dante it was nothing short of a miracle. Yet to be brief, Usimbardi was thought much of in public meetings by

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<sup>1</sup> For history of the Usimbardi family see page 11 etc.

those wise men who placed the interest of the Republic before those of a mere party.

On the evening when our story begins, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1325, Usimbardi, after having taken his usual stroll round the Baptistery and the Duomo, went to the Loggia of the Elisei, beneath which a group of citizens met every evening to discuss the news of the day.

On that evening the conversation had been lively enough, for several arguments arose, which showed but too well that the sentiments of hate and animosity which had so long harassed the country were not yet extinguished.

They were talking of the war still waging with Antelminelli, of the reprisals of their own army, under the captain Raimondo Cardona, when from the direction of the tower of the Castagna, a young man arrived in the loggia, who as soon as he could sufficiently calm his feelings, and recover his breath, exclaimed in a tone of voice which froze the souls of all who heard him :

“ Florence is lost ! ”

“ Lost ! ” cried every one as with a single voice.

“ At least if not entirely ruined, she has lost her forces horribly. Cardona has met the hostile army in the lower valley between Montecatini and Fucecchio, has been defeated, and he himself with a large part of his army, is thrown into prison by Castruccio Castracane. The news has only just been brought to the Signoria by a wounded knight, who rode day and night to warn Florence to arm herself to the defence.”

This notice fell like a thunderbolt on all who were

gathered in the loggia. There was a moment of icy silence, then some began to whisper a word into the ear of their neighbours, some muttered imprecations, and others plunged into a dispute on the causes of the defeat.

"Idiotic ignorance in those who are at the head of our affairs," exclaimed Simone del Manzecca, a turbulent and overbearing youth, who had taken a large part in every litigation and quarrel which had happened lately in Florence.

"Say rather that the blame lies with those who weary the city with disputes and contests, which are anything but honourable," Usimbardi retorted impetuously. "It is on account of such men that the Republic has been constrained to have recourse to mercenary troops to augment her militia. And you Simone del Manzecca, who inveigh against the Signoria, should first blame yourself who being at the head of every disturbance have had your part in causing the troubles of your native city."

"And do you dare tell me this! you Messer Giovanni Usimbardi, who with the Alighieri, Cavalcanti and all the other Bianchi made such bitter war with the Neri?"

"I never made war on any one, because I have always deplored these unreasonable discords, but meanwhile, my good *Messere*, now that your fellow-citizens are bravely fighting against their enemy, and Florence has need of the arms of all her sons, you being young, strong, and your own master, stay here preferring foolish town quarrels, to the well-being of your country. Blush for yourself and do not dare to accuse others of causing the evils

which you and your unworthy comrades have brought on the Republic."

And with these words Usimbardi descended the steps of the loggia and hurried towards his house.

But when he reached the arch of the little street leading to San Romeo, he perceived that he was being followed, and turning, saw a man wrapped in a mantle, who, sword in hand, was in the act of attempting to wound him. Messer Giovanni immediately grasped his sword, which every man kept at his side in those stormy times, but before he had time to defend himself the unknown was upon him, and he felt himself wounded in the breast. Usimbardi called for help, then fell exclaiming: "Simone del Manzecca, I did not believe you an assassin!" and swooned away.

On recovering consciousness he found himself in his own bed, and under the angelic care of his daughter Bianca.

#### IV.

A year before the events I have related took place, a young man had presented himself one fine morning at the Usimbardi family palace craving audience of Messer Giovanni.

"I do not think this is the best moment to speak with him," observed one of his servants. "My master is just starting with his daughter for his Castle at Vincigliata, and will not be able to delay many minutes, as the horses are ready."

"Tell him I have urgent need to speak with him, and that I too am going towards Vincigliata."

The servant bowed and retired from the room, soon returning to say that "Messer Giovanni begged him to defer the interview till next day."

"In that case tell your master that I am going to fetch my horse, and shall overtake him on the road."

A quarter of an hour later Giovanni Usimbardi riding beside Bianca,—who was mounted on a white mule with housings of blue and gold,—issued from his palace, and crossing the city took the road leading to the monastery of San Salvi, outside the Porta alla Croce, followed by two armed men, who rode at a little distance.

When the cavalcade began to ascend the lane leading to the church of San Martino a Mensola,<sup>1</sup> the sound of a swiftly trotting horse was heard behind them. A moment afterwards a dusty and wayworn horseman joined the party.

"Simone del Manzecca!" said Messer Giovanni in a tone of amazement.

"Precisely so."

"And was it you who wished to speak to me?"

"It was, *Messere*."

Usimbardi made another gesture of astonishment, and then spurred his horse a little away from his daughter, that he might listen to Manzecca.

"Messer Giovanni," said the latter after a little hesitation, "I have to confide a secret to you, and to beg a favour

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<sup>1</sup> See page 148.

which, although long desired, I have never yet dared to express. I warn you that your reply will decide whether I may always lead a happy life, or whether I must exist in sorrow, or perhaps make an end of my life."

"Simone! I really do not understand a word you say, nor do I comprehend how you can choose as your confidant a man to whom you have so frequently shown your dislike and opposition."

"Listen, I may have shown myself opposed to you on certain questions, being probably influenced by my friends, but now I am ready to ask a thousand pardons, because.... I love your daughter...."

"I sincerely hope you are jesting, *Del Manzecca*."

"I swear by the head of my mother that I speak from my heart, and earnestly sue for the hand of *Bianca*."

"Impossible," replied *Usimbardi* with the most freezing coldness.

"And why should it be impossible?"

"Because *Giovanni Usimbardi* loves his child too well to sacrifice her whole life. And a sacrifice it would be, I say, to unite her to a man who has no other thought but quarrels, civic discords, tumults...."

"Pardon, *Messere*, -- if I have had such thoughts it does not consequently follow that I may not abandon them, and in fact, from this moment I swear to occupy myself neither with wars nor factions."

"Empty words -- empty words! You made the same promise to *Betto Betti* when you asked the hand of his daughter *Bice*, and yet the poor soul died of the griefs you

caused her. No! we tread paths too opposite to be ever united, the daughter of Giovanni Usimbardi will never be the bride of.... Simone del Manzecca."

And Usimbardi drawing rein a little returned to Bianca's side.

During the rest of the way, which by a steep path led to the top of the hill of Vincigliata,<sup>1</sup> not one of the three spoke a single word. Messer Giovanni and Bianca seemed wrapped in contemplation of the marvellous panorama opening beneath their eyes. Del Manzecca riding behind them, let the reins fall on his horse's neck, and with drooping head remained lost in dark thoughts.

It was plain that he really suffered. The contrast of his humiliation and the pain produced by Usimbardi's words, to his usual pride, and bold character, shewed that sorrow had overwhelmed him, and he sat immovable, chained to his horse, without knowing what was going on around him.

What a strange contrast! That man so hard, the enemy of peace and tranquillity, who dreamed of nothing save arms and tumults from morning till night, who looked with utter indifference on all the maidens of the city, was now enchanted by a glance from Bianca, whom he had seen the first time at the "Negruttosa"<sup>2</sup> on May-day. From the moment he had known her, he never failed to follow her whenever she appeared, and passed hours in pacing

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<sup>1</sup> This was the old paved mule road, traces of which still remain. See page 37.

<sup>2</sup> The Loggia of the Adimari family in Via Calzaioli.

beneath her house, contemplating the windows at which she sometimes appeared. In fact Simone was in love.

Meanwhile the little cavalcade had reached the draw-bridge of the Castle of Vincigliata, and Usimbardi delayed a moment to salute del Manzecca, who had remained some distance behind. The young man perceiving this hastened his steps and asked: "Are you still decided in your refusal?"

"It is irrevocable."

"The worse for you," muttered Simone between his teeth.

Burying his spurs in the flanks of his poor horse he bowed, and departed at such a wild pace that he was instantly lost beneath the trees which sheltered the road to Castel di Poggio,<sup>1</sup> then a strong fort belonging to the Manzecca family.

From that day Simone deteriorated more than ever. He quarrelled with everyone, began new contests, and instituted a bitter feud against poor Usimbardi, dogging every step he or Bianca made. This feud spurred him on to such lengths that it led to the consequence I have already narrated.

## V.

What dark days were those for the inhabitants of Vincigliata!

It was November, the North wind, which always dominates those hills, seemed more bitter than usual, the sun had not the strength to penetrate the heavy masses of clouds

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<sup>1</sup> See page 5.

which darkened the sky, and from time to time a fine rain fell, and contributed to render the weary autumn day even more melancholy.

As soon as his severe wound permitted him, Messer Giovanni Usimbardi left his Florentine palace, and together with Bianca and his wife, who had just returned from the Mugello, went up to his Castle at Vincigliata to try if in the pure mountain air he could recover the strength he had lost during his illness.

At first the effect seemed to fulfill his hopes, but when the warm October sun was replaced by the fogs and damp of November the improvement went at a snail's pace, and poor Usimbardi was obliged to stay many a day shut up in his room without even the consolation of a ray of sunlight to enliven him for a half hour on the terrace. Monna Tessa was still an invalid and could do little towards nursing her husband. Giovanni's brother Barnaba Usimbardi,<sup>1</sup> who lived nearly all the year in the Castle, was occupied either with his studies, or else went out hunting in the woods, and rarely came in to chat with his relatives. Niccolò, Giovanni's son,<sup>2</sup> was then studying under a friend of his father's, who had been a scholar of Brunetto Latini, and he only came to Vincigliata on rare occasions.

It is easy to imagine how long the hours were to poor Bianca. Young, beautiful, and courted by all, yet constrained to stay up in that solitary height, without seeing a living soul, she passed her days either seated by her sick

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<sup>1</sup> See page 12.

<sup>2</sup> See page 13 et seq.

father's chair, or in working at her chamber window, where she could gaze on the beautiful view of Florence crowned with a hundred towers, gleaming on the banks of the limpid Arno in the fertile plain below. At rare intervals she took a walk round the confines, or on the ramparts of the Castle to breathe the fresh air, or drink in the beauties of some exquisite sunset. She was on these occasions accompanied by her faithful maid Berta, whom Bianca loved as a sincere friend, almost a sister.

Early one Sunday morning Bianca descended the steps of the Castle, and went to walk outside its confines. Any one who looked at her would easily have perceived that she was the prey of melancholy thoughts, and indeed she had good reason for her sadness. On the previous evening before she went to bed, her father called her to his side and said: "Listen to me, Bianca. You know how much I love you, your brother, mother and all my household. I only live for you all, and without you I should have no wish but to end my troubrous days. And yet, my child, it is necessary that we must part for a time, I shall return though I do not know precisely when; I have a duty to fulfill, the well-being of the city is compromised, and she has need of the arms of all her sons. Now as some of my deadly enemies have been saying that none of the Usimbardi house have taken arms for the Republic, I intend to join the militia as soon as my health is sufficiently restored."

On hearing these words Bianca was stunned as by a thunderbolt, and as soon as her father had finished, she burst into tears, and uniting her prayers to those of her

mother, besought the old man to abandon his design, but it was like trying to move a rock, and at length they were obliged to desist.

That night she could not close her eyes, and at day-break she went out as though to hold counsel with nature. It was a dreary and unpleasant day, it rained, and the *tramontana* (North wind) was howling as it rushed through the apertures of the battlements which crowned the Castle walls. Bianca wrapped a wimple round her white neck, passing it over her head to keep the wind from disarranging her hair, and having caused the door of the northern turret to be opened, she took her way swiftly to the church of Santa Maria di Vincigliata,<sup>1</sup> which stood at about a hundred paces from the Castle.

The church was deserted, and Bianca, traversing its entire length, passed on to kneel before the high altar, over which a large lamp was burning before an image of the Madonna. It was to this image — which was held to be miraculous — that she directed her earnest gaze and prayers, supplicating the Virgin to keep her father from forsaking them. She remained there for some time, weeping and praying, but at length raising her eyes she found herself no longer alone. A handsome youth, with his right arm in a sling, was leaning against the wall, entirely occupied in gazing at her. Bianca glanced but once at him, and then arose to go away. The young man preceded her, and as she stopped to take the holy water from the *pila* he offered

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<sup>1</sup> See page 142.

it to her on the point of his finger. Bianca thanked him with a sweet but fleeting smile, which was interrupted by a tear, and that tear must have gone straight to the heart of the youth, who took courage to ask the cause of her grief.

"A very sad cause, *Messere*," she replied.

"This is the first time I have the honor of speaking with you, it is true, but if you would tell me your trouble, and I could do anything to relieve it I should indeed be happy."

"Impossible, my father is too fixed in his resolve to let himself be persuaded, — even I have not succeeded, so I shall be obliged to remain alone with my poor sick mother in this deserted place, without ever seeing a soul."

The young man with troubled gesture interrupted:

"I understand.... but it is wrong of your father to leave those lovely eyes full of tears, and to shut your heart from a sweet affection...."

"*Messere*," put in Bianca, "you mistake, it is not I who would abandon my father, but he who wants to leave me — he is going to join the militia."

"Ah!" added the youth, breathing more freely, "I left the army two days ago," and he pointed to the arm which hung useless against his breast.

Bianca bent her head, and giving her hand to the young man turned towards the Castle. Taking her hand he raised it gently to his lips and then said: "Adieu, gentle maiden, we shall meet again if you will not forget me."

The girl's glance was more eloquent than a promise,

and he walked away towards Castel di Poggio with a joyful smile on his lips.

From that moment Bianca was less sad, she let her father talk of the enemy's forces, and the enterprise of the militia, and then defying the rigours of the season went for a walk,— this time contrary to former custom, choosing the ramparts of the outer wall on the side that looked towards the church. Without knowing the reason the girl felt something new, within her, so unusual and so sweet, that it partly compensated for the grief she suffered. The scene in the church, the looks and words of the young soldier, all came crowding into her mind, and the thoughts were not all unpleasing to her. The young man was handsome, he had spoken so kindly, and had so beseechingly prayed her not to forget him, that he remained resplendent in her heart like a brilliant star in a dark and tempestuous atmosphere. While she was thus occupied in thought, she heard voices in the guard-room of one of the turrets. Two men who were at the same time her father's servants, and the soldiers who formed the guard of the Castle, were holding the following colloquy :

“ Times are getting worse and work is increasing, eh ! Cece ? ” said one.

“ How ? ” asked the other.

“ Because Messer Giovanni has ordered a strong watch, night and day.”

“ What is the master afraid of ? ”

“ First of all there are the soldiers of that devilish Castracane, who play all kinds of pranks and rove our country

just as if they were in the plains of Lucca, and who — *Domenidlio* save us! — might have a fancy to pay us a visit. Then there are those *signori* up there, from whom one may always expect some attack."

" The Del Manzecca ? "

" Precisely, you know there are some turbulent ones among them, who hate Messer Giovanni to the death, especially since he refused the hand of Donna Bianca to that villain of a Simone. Add to this that the younger brother has also returned from the camp, and you will understand that perils increase."

" There is less fear from the younger one, for they say he is a very different character from the rest of them."

" Eh ! it may be so, but 'he who lives with the lame learns to limp,' and I who carry a good many *Calendimaggio* (May-day's) on my back have never seen anything but wolves come out of that old lair at Castel di Poggio."

" You are too superstitious, my venerable Ludovico."

" And you, my boy, are too simple. Meanwhile the young wolf was prowling about the Castle not long ago, and you may be sure he did not come here for nothing."

The dialogue finished here, but it served to place a new doubt in the mind of poor Bianca, who had listened attentively to it.

## VI.

Although the next day was not a *festa*, Bianca found an excuse for going again to the church. She was accompanied by the faithful Berta, but it was the same thing

as being alone, for Bianca had no secrets which the maid did not share. In the church she knelt before the usual image and prayed, but with wandering thoughts, for every minute she would raise her head to see if the young soldier had felt the same inspiration as herself, and had returned to the church at the same hour as the preceding day.

Bianca who — simple and innocent as she was — had until now known no affection but that of her parents, her brother and Berta, now entered into a new region of ideas, and began to feel that the company of her mother and her maid were not enough for her; she found her affections needed something beyond, and the thoughts of her heart turned to the youth who had so impressed her at their first meeting. She felt that she must see him again, and speak to him, because she liked him and his speech was kind. In fact it was love in the bud, which promised to become a sturdy blossom. That day her prayers were even longer than usual, but during all the time no foot crossed the threshold of the church; and even outside it, though the girl cast many glances on the winding lane up which she had seen the young warrior disappear, she never saw a living soul. The following day however events fell out differently. Bianca saw and spoke to him, found that he was named Uberto, and was son of a feudal Lord of the Mugello, but that his father now lived a solitary and retired life in an old house near Castel di Poggio.

Love, as we know, may begin in divers ways, and under divers circumstances, but once begun its progress is always the same.

Bianca and Uberto had no need of vain words to tell each other that they loved. Their looks expressed it clearly enough, and when once their affection was revealed they had no other thought but to meet as often as possible, and talk of a future which to youthful lovers is always tinged with rose colour.

They arranged their trysts, and method of corresponding without being discovered by the inhabitants of the Castle, and then took thought as to the means of attaining the object of their desires.

The love of the two young people could not long be concealed, however — one day Messer Giovanni himself surprised Bianca as she talked with Uberto from an open window in the boundary wall.

To glance on the scene, to frown angrily, and drag his daughter into the Castle by the arm was the work of a moment to old Usimbardi.

When they reached the inner *ballium* or quadrangle, Messer Giovanni entered the guard-room which was near, and seating himself on a wooden " settle " demanded of his daughter: " Bianca, I must know the whole truth, because this concerns your well-being for life and, as your father, I have a right to ask. Tell me, is this the first time you have seen that young man with whom you were speaking ? "

" No," replied Bianca hesitatingly.

" Then you have known him some time ? "

" About a month."

" And.... what object has he in talking with you ? "

Bianca was silent.

"Perhaps.... you love him?" insisted the old man.

The girl bowed her head blushing, but spoke no word.

The old man's face contracted, it seemed as though he were thinking for a minute what to say, then he added :

"Bianca, do you love your father?"

She only replied with tears, placing both hands on her parent's shoulder.

"Well, if you love me, promise you will never again speak to that man."

"Father!"

"But.... are you aware who he is?"

"He is the son of a Lord of the Mugello."

"He has deceived you. That is Uberto del Manzecca, son of the Lord of Castel di Poggio, one of the bitterest enemies of the house of Usimbardi, and especially of your father, nay, more, he is the brother of that Simone who but lately asked your hand."

"But perhaps,—he does not hold the opinions of his brothers."

"My child, you are too credulous! for the rest you might know that you could never enter a family one of whom tried to assassinate your father."

"Assassinate you!" cried the girl in terror.

"Yes me,—do you remember that evening when hearing my cry resound so alarmingly in the narrow street under our *palazzo* you ran down the stairs and found your father in the street wounded and bathed in blood? Neither that evening nor at any other time have I cared to reveal to you the mystery of that event, but now I must no longer

conceal it. The assassin who wounded me was Simone del Manzecca, the brother of the man to whom you would give your love."

This revelation was so astounding that Bianca suddenly growing white as marble, swayed, and straightway fainted in the arms of the old man.

When she recovered consciousness she was in her own bed burning with fever, and weak as though she had suffered a severe illness.

There amidst the delirium of the fever which kept its hold on her for many days, her thoughts brooded on her short and unhappy love. She remembered the day in which Uberto's words first touched her fresh young heart, his vows of affection, the talks she had enjoyed with him when she went out of the Castle, or at the little window where her father had surprised her. At that spot she had passed many happy hours, there she had come during the evening gloom defying the cold, to see and speak with him and hear again those protestations of his love which he had so often made before. Yet through all this he had deceived her, in making her believe him the son of a feudal Lord in the Mugello, while he was one of the Del Manzecca, — the enemies of her father and his house. Probably he did not hold the ideas of his kinsmen, but how could that help her? He was still the brother of Messer Giovanni's would-be murderer, and Bianca loved her father too well to grieve him by showing kindness to Uberto. Therefore one bright morning, she, with a resolute heart, seated herself at her table and wrote these lines on a piece of parchment:

" *Messere,*

" You spoke to me with such seeming frankness, making your confidences with such appearance of truth that I believed you. It is only now that I learn you are Uberto del Manzecca. A Del Manzecca and an Usimbardi can never be united. Say to your brother Simone that I pray God may send him his grace, but that he can never be anything but the bitter enemy of my father. *Messere*, I love my house and my poor father too well not to tell you that all must be at an end between us.

" **BIANCA USIMBARDI.**"

This letter cost her a tremendous effort and when she lifted her head, her beautiful eyes were full of tears. As she contemplated that parchment, how often did the impulse seize her to destroy it, or throw it into the fire which crackled so briskly in the sculptured chimney-piece! But she had strength to resist temptation, so that at length with resolute gesture she folded the parchment and opening the drawer of a cabinet, drew from it a pale blue ribbon with which she tied the packet.

When evening came she went down to the outer court and opening a small window in the eastern wall she placed her letter in a crevice of the masonry. She was sure that when Del Manzecca came as usual beneath the window, where he was accustomed to see Bianca, he would look in the old crevice, perceive the letter and.... the rest would follow by itself.

## VII.

The reader must pardon us if for a short space we leave Vincigliata and the actors in our story to give a general glance at the very important and serious events which occupied the Florentine Republic at that time.

It is true that one does not generally approve of interrupting the thread of a narrative to insert a bit of history, but in this case the reader must not frown, for the history is necessary to the story.

Castruccio Castracane degli Antelminelli having since 1316 made himself Lord of Lucca — his native city — began to cherish in his heart the idea of becoming head of the Ghibelline party in Tuscany, — a party which after a long struggle had to bend beneath the power of the Guelph faction, which at that epoch was emboldened by the entry into Italy of Count Philip of Valois, called hither by Pope John XXII, and King Robert of Naples.

The ambitious Castruccio, availing himself of the moment when the Florentines had sent contingents to help Valois in his war against the Visconti of Milan, armed as many men as he could gather, and without any formal declaration of war invaded the Florentine territory. He took the fortresses of Cappiano, Montefalcone, and Santa Maria in Monte; attempted, but in vain, to storm Fucecchio, reached Vinci and Cerreto Guidi, and returned to Lucca glorious and triumphant, boasting of having set fire and flame to all the country he passed through. Not content with this

he united with the Genoese exiles and went to besiege Genoa, he was however obliged to desist, because the Florentines, placed there under arms, had already pushed on to the Val di Nievòle.

For that year (1321) the approaching winter put a stop to further hostilities and a short truce ensued. But in 1323 Castruccio again took up arms against Florence ; he threatened Prato, but the Florentines were prompt in driving him back ; an assault of Pistoia was equally fruitless, so he constructed a strong fort at Serravalle, and from thence he again attempted to take Pistoia in 1324. The city resisted, and obtained a truce, but at that time, a certain Pistoiese, Filippo Tedici, let himself be tempted by Antelmanelli's gold, and traitorously sold his country for 10,000 florins, and Castruccio's army entered it on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1325.

All these events succeeded each other with such dazzling rapidity, that Florence, confused by such bold measures, had scarcely time to organise a defence against the powerful invader. In 1325 however she armed 20,000 foot and 4000 horse, and sent them against Castruccio under the command of Raimondo Cardona, a Spaniard, who had acquired, no one knows how, the fame of being a brave and able *condottiero*.

Having dislodged the Lucchesi from Pistoia and besieged several forts, Cardona, instead of following up his triumphal march to Lucca after the taking of Altopascio, halted without reason near the marshes of Bientina and Fucecchio, leaving his unemployed men to fall victims to the *malaria* which made those places uninhabitable. The Spanish *condottiero* had preferred gold to glory, and sacrificed his name as an able

general to accept that of traitor, for he did indeed betray the Republic which reposed entire trust in him, by delaying their army until the Lucchesi had put together fresh forces to oppose to Florentine. He had however no reason to be proud of his work. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September the two armies came to action in the plains round the lake of Bientina in Val di Nievole, and the Lucchesi reinforced by 800 horse under Azzo Visconti, and assisted by the perfidy of the Florentine *condottiero*, obtained a signal victory.

The number of Florentine prisoners which fell into the hands of the victors was immense, and numerous were the warriors who fell on those desolated fields.

Even the *carroccio* — the "palladium" of the Florentine Republic — was captured by the enemy who dragged through the mire the glorious standard that had so often majestically waved in victory.

Among the prisoners was Cardona himself who though he had aided the success of Castracane was treated by him precisely like his companions in misfortune, the other captains of militia. It is easy to imagine that the news of this defeat brought sorrow and amazement on the Republic. The powerful army they had assembled at such cost and in which they placed all their hopes was utterly destroyed, and at the moment it was impossible to gather together enough men to arrest the triumphant march of the foe. Nevertheless they did not lose courage, and preparing for a desperate defence fortified the walls, gates, and bastions, which were just then newly finished.

There was indeed a good need of them, for the Lucchesi,

having besieged the fortresses on the lower Val d'Arno and recaptured Altopascio, burned the country up to Signa, and fortifying themselves there, pushed on to the very walls, where they insulted the Florentines by running races in derision.

If Florence itself was not besieged by the bold *condottiero*, it was certainly due to a woman, one of the Frescobaldi, mother of Guido Tarlati, bishop of Arezzo, and one of the leaders of the Ghibelline party, which to the undoing of Florence had joined Castracane. The Arezzo troops led by this warlike bishop marched towards Florence and were about to unite with the Lucchesi, when the Donna Frescobaldi went to meet her son and prayed him with such earnest supplications for the good of her country, that Tarlati, much moved, desisted from the emprise, and so Florence was saved.

Castruccio after a short stay at Signa struck his tents when the bad season approached, and still putting every town and castle on his way to fire and the sword, made a triumphal entry into Lucca on November 11<sup>th</sup>, dragging behind his gilded car the Florentine prisoners, among whom was Cardona, who, in spite of the services he had rendered to the victor, had the mortification of finding himself despised, and trampled beneath the feet of the ambitious Lucchese.

Even in the winter the Lucchesi did not desist from molesting the Florentine territory, sending small detachments to besiege and set fire to the undefended places, and sustaining skirmishes of some importance and various success with the Florentine militia, which endeavoured to put an end to such incursions.

## VIII.

We will now return to our story.

Messer Giovanni had hardly recovered from his wound, when — having said *adieu* to his wife and Bianca, whom he recommended to the care of his brother Barnaba and old Ludovico, whom he charged to guard the Castle — he took the arms he had often wielded so valiantly, and, with his faithful squire Cioni, galloped towards Florence.

On arriving there, he found that squadrons were being organised to oppose the enemy, who was continually molesting the less fortified places. Old Usimbardi went at once to the Signoria to offer his services, and being known as a brave and valiant warrior, he was given the command of a squadron of men at arms, — both foot and horse, — with orders to march to the lower Val d' Arno where Castracane's troops were molesting Fucecchio and the neighbouring forts.

The squadrons commanded by Usimbardi were marching out of the city at dusk one evening, when they heard a frightful noise in a little house near the Porta al Prato. Men and women vociferating wildly, sounds of glass and earthen-ware being broken, discordant music and noisy songs — a sad contrast! Here were brave men going to fight, perhaps, to die for their country, while others were feasting and junketing as if peace and tranquillity were still reigning in Florence. Usimbardi made a gesture of disdain, bent his head and pursued his way. But at that moment some cries

attracted his attention: "Help help!" screeched a female voice: "For pity's sake haste, and may God reward you."

"I suppose those villains are ill-using some poor woman who has had the ill-luck to pass by this infamous place," muttered the old captain to himself and without further ado he lowered his visor and, spurring his horse, dashed across the field to the place from which the cries issued. He was aware that another cavalier followed behind him, but believing it to be his squire he took no notice.

After a short ride they reached an open space, but instead of an unhappy victim found only a woman of ill-fame and a young man, who were laughing excessively at having given the two warriors a useless ride. Usimbardi with an impetuous motion was just going to raise his visor, but he desisted, and said:

"I might have expected to find Simone del Manzecca in the haunt of idle cowards who waste themselves in rioting when the country has need of their arms! But I warn you have a care,—or you will be called to render an account of a certain attempt at assassination one evening in September under the arch of San Romeo."

The smile quickly vanished from the lips of the young man who had received the two cavaliers so ill, and after a sudden gesture of astonishment, he put his hand to his side and drew out a long sword which he plunged beneath Usimbardi's horse.

Del Manzecca was very strong and a good fencer, so that holding the reins of the horse he began to make cuts and thrusts with his weapon trying to penetrate the aper-

tures in the visor of the old captain's helmet. Suddenly however he felt his shoulder seized by two hands of iron, and he was soon rolling on the earth. Before he had time to think, the knight who accompanied Usimbardi had dismounted and was upon him, showing himself a powerful opponent. In a moment Del Manzecca's sword was in the hands of the unknown warrior, who broke the blade across his knee and then threw it in his face exclaiming: "For shame, you cowardly wretch!"

The clash of arms and the cries of the woman who had rushed into the house, brought out a number of armed men, but before they got involved in a skirmish the two knights set spurs to their horses and rejoined the squadron, which was still marching across the deserted and marshy plain, which extended a long way beyond *San Donato in Polverosa*.

"I owe my life to you," said Usimbardi turning to his companion in arms, while with one hand he raised his visor; "may I crave the name of my preserver, for although you are under my command I know not who you may be."

"Do not trouble to enquire, *Messere*. My name can interest you but little, being as yet unknown. It is enough that I am Florentine, and if birth could give nobility, then I should be noble."

These words were uttered in a tone so despondent that the old man regretted having given pain to the poor knight by his question. He was silent but examined him from head to foot to see if he could find a sign which would reveal his personality. But his cuirass bore no device, neither crest nor plume surmounted his helmet, no ornament was

seen on the trappings of his horse, and he did not even wear a badge across the chest, or at the hilt of his sword, the only thing noticeable was a little bow of blue ribbon fastened to one of the buckles of his breastplate.

Usimbardi was obliged to give up his investigations, and resigning himself to await a propitious moment to solve the mystery, returned to his post at the head of the column, which gaily advanced favoured by lovely weather, though it was only the end of February.

Meanwhile we will leave Usimbardi's squadron to proceed tranquilly on its way, and return for a time to Vincigliata.

The evening her father left the Castle to place himself at the command of the Signoria, Bianca, after having wept some bitter tears together with her mother, went out in the *ballium*, and ascended the steps that led to the outer ramparts where, leaning on the parapet of the walls, she gazed long and earnestly towards Florence. The purity of the air, the silence reigning around, the vivid rays of moonlight, the far off gurgle of the Mensola, rippling over its stony bed, and the mild temperature more like spring than winter, were enough to cheer anyone. But the beauty of the evening only added to the sorrow of the poor girl who was re-viewing her unhappy position. She was disturbed in her sad thoughts by the call of a sentinel who gave the alarm from the height of the Castle. Bianca remained as if petrified, and had no strength to move, she feared an ambush, and was only reassured when she saw Ludovico come out in the quadrangle with two soldiers, one of whom carried a torch.

"Here, here, Messer Ludovico," said the sentinel who had just come down from his outlook.

"But what are you speaking of?"

"I speak of nothing less than an escalade."

"You are dreaming, *Guercio*."

"Oho! so I am dreaming am I! why, I was up at the top with all the big lanterns open, and I plainly saw a man scaling the wall, below the little turret,—I could even distinguish that he had a rope ladder."

"But did you not see where he went?"

"No, I could not, for down there between the trees and the tower that shades the light, there is an infernal darkness, and I saw him disappear without knowing where he hid himself."

"Eh! we'll find him soon enough."

And the four men began to patrol the whole Castle to discover the bold fellow who had dared to scale their walls.

Meanwhile Bianca, who had listened attentively to the dialogue, felt slightly timorous, and bade a soldier accompany her to the door of the inner quadrangle. She walked off as fast as possible without looking behind her, when she heard her name spoken, and saw a human figure emerge from the shadow of one of the pillars. She was on the point of calling out or fleeing away.... then she stopped suddenly. She had recognised the man who appeared in such a strange manner.

"Messer Uberto, are you not ashamed of such an action? Do you not know that in thus invading the house of another man you run the risk of losing your life? You will find

it not so easy to pass — the soldiers are already seeking, and must soon discover you." And Bianca drawing aside signed to him to fly. But Del Manzecca catching at her robe held her back, and throwing himself at her feet said in beseeching tones:

" For pity's sake, hear me, Bianca — I *must* speak to you."

" It is impossible, *Messere*, — let me go."

" Bianca, one single word."

" No, no, never!"

" It is perhaps the last time that I may see or speak to you and therefore you might hear me this once only."

" But.... the soldiers are already near, they will come in a moment and...."

" Will arrest me, but first I must tell you that you have ruined my existence, and driven me mad, I must die because life is nothing to me without you. I confess I deceived you, Bianca ; yes, I showed myself to you in a character not my own — but such a fault might be pardoned, — and you ? you have driven me from you and made my life eternally miserable."

" *Messere*, I pray you to leave me, because...."

" Bianca, Bianca ! I dare not implore your pardon — perhaps I am not worthy of it, and will resign myself to atone for it with my life. I go — you will see me no more — but I could not leave without hearing from your own lips that you bear me no hate."

" Messer Uberto, I repeat...."

" Have pity, Bianca."

During this time the soldiers, after having searched every

corner of space between the walls and the Castle, turned towards the cloister where Bianca had entered.

"Softly, softly," said one of the soldiers, "I think I hear voices — let us search the cloister."

The four soldiers opened the little door in the gate, and the flare of the torch had already cast a vivid ray under the silent arches.

Uberto rose, glanced towards the door and turned pale, then turning towards Bianca murmured beseechingly :

"Save me!"

Bianca was undecided for one moment, then taking the young man's arm to guide him, she entered a very dark room, traversed two or three others nearly destitute of furniture, and then she ascended a small secret staircase. When they reached a room illumined by a small lamp hanging before an image of the Madonna, Bianca stopped to listen. It seemed that the soldiers had heard them, for they were following the same route. What could she do? She dared not show herself at that hour alone with a stranger. There was only one way to save him, and though she knew it to be perilous to herself she did not delay in taking it. Following up her course they reached a door, opened it, and making Del Manzecca enter she locked the door.

It was her own chamber.

The two young people remained in forced silence for a while, then Uberto taking courage drew near Bianca murmuring :

"Bianca, do you remember the day when we spoke of our future life and happiness together? Who could have

foreseen that all those sweet dreams would have so soon melted away?"

The girl was silent.

"Happiness, love, family joy, all vanished, all dead, and why? Because I am named Del Manzecca and have the misfortune to possess brothers who dishonour my father's house, and are enemies to all those who love the peace and well-being of our country. Bianca, I swear to you I am not one of those traitors, I am but an unhappy man worthy of pity."

The poor girl was truly softened by Uberto's tears. "He certainly is not to blame," she said to herself, "therefore why not pardon him, and let him take courage once more. But my father, poor father, who hates all the Del Manzecca family, because they tried to kill him! Yet Uberto need not necessarily be like his brother."

While thinking thus she had drawn near the young man and rested her hand on his shoulder. It was like a flash of light to poor Uberto. He rose up, took Bianca's two hands, and placing them on his heart pressed a kiss on her innocent lips, which was not repulsed. Peace was made.

Meanwhile the soldiers continued to seek about every corner of the Castle guided also by Messer Barnaba, who suddenly awaked from sleep had sprung out of bed and joined old Ludovico in his search. Even Madonna Tessa, invalid as she was, still retained the courage of a Florentine matron, and issuing from her room with a damascus poignard at her belt, ready for any occasion, descended the stairs.

"It seems to me we might go on hunting till to-morrow without finding anything," said Messer Barnaba. "Guercio must have been bewildered."

"The Lord save us from cross-eyed soldiers," muttered Ludovico. And having sent back all the men he closed the door, while poor Guercio, not persuaded that he had been mistaken, turned his eyes in every direction to look for the terrible enemy.

A moment later Bianca accompanied her lover to a postern door in the walls, opened it and let him pass out.

"Adieu, Bianca," he said.

"Till we meet again, Uberto — and when will that be?"

"When I shall be worthy of you and of your family."

The postern gate creaking on its hinges closed, and all was silence in the Castle of Vincigliata.

## IX.

The bell of a tiny country church rang out the hour of noon as Messer Usimbardi's squadron ascended a hill surmounted by an ancient castle overlooking the lower Val d'Arno, and not far from San Miniato.

The little band, composed of barely a score of knights and a hundred men between archers and cross-bowmen — weary from a harassing march under fire of the Lucchesi, who were then overrunning the country, came to seek refuge in a fortress which was garrisoned by the Florentine soldiers.

A fierce *tramontana* mercilessly shook the trees of a wide forest which clothed the sides of the hill, and rendered

the wintry air still more icy, so much so that the poor soldiers, frozen with the cold, were longing for the shelter of the Castle walls, and a good fire to warm themselves.

They were within a few yards of the Castle gates when from the heights of the tower, instead of the *oriflamme* with the cross and lily of Florence, the standard of Lucca with its panther was suddenly set up, and at the same moment the drawbridge being lowered, a party of cavaliers rode forth to meet them, lance in rest.

The charge was so precipitous that the Florentines had barely time to take in the meaning of it, without thinking of defence. The cavaliers were followed by some foot soldiers who fiercely assailed our squadron, which, although discomposed by the violence of the attack, had now placed themselves rapidly on the defence.

While the skirmish between the Florentines and Lucchesi is raging we will see how the latter had been able to introduce themselves into the fortress.

Usimbardi while yet at some distance had sent forward a knight to inform the castellan of the approach of his troops.

Cece Buondelmonte who commanded the little garrison of about thirty men, in charge of the fort, received a messenger who said the squadron would arrive within a few minutes.

And in fact a squadron did arrive, and was received with all due deference by the soldiers within, until they suddenly found themselves assailed, captured, and shut up, together with Buondelmonte in a large vault, where daylight scarcely penetrated through a small iron-barred window.

Usimbardi's messenger had been stopped in the wood, obliged to dismount, and confess the object of his errand. One of the aggressors then took his horse, rode to the Castle and acted as the Florentine herald. A moment later the squadron arrived as we have seen, but with the difference that they were not Florentines, but soldiers of the powerful Castracane, who after having well eaten and drunk were enabled to surprise the Florentine troops.

The skirmish on the road continued with varied results. In one place the enemy's cavalry were attacking the poor Florentine infantry, who, being ill able to support the furious onslaught, retreated towards the forest. In another part the cavalry of the two republics were fighting man to man, using halberds, maces, and broad swords which glancing from the cuirasses sent forth vigorous sparks. But the Luechesi were more numerous, less weary, and had more advantageous ground, so that after ten minutes engagement, the Florentines were feeling it likely that they would have to retreat in disorder, leaving several men on the field. At that moment a cavalier detached himself from the group of combatants, spurred his charger and galloped up to the Castle. The drawbridge was still down, and the knight crossed quickly, and by some well aimed blows sent flying two soldiers who were left on guard, and passed into the *ballium*. In less time than it takes us to tell, he had sprung from his horse, and with his sword still in hand turned about as if to find his bearings. He looked into a corridor and shouted: "Messer Cece Buondelmonte!" No answer. He turned back, saw a narrow stair leading to the subter-

ranean vaults, descended a few steps and repeated his call. This time he heard as it were a murmur of many voices afar off; without hesitation he ran down the stairs and found himself in a very dark passage; shouted again for Buondelmonte, and this time heard plainly a voice replying: "I am here," which seemed to come from within a closed door, and assured him that it was here the prisoners were confined.

"Messer Cece," he said drawing near the door, "how can we open this door?"

"By the same means that it was shut, I presume."

"I am a Florentine, Messer Buondelmonte, and am trying to set you free. There is fierce fighting going on between us and the Lucchesi, and your help would be our salvation."

"Malediction! but how can we get out of this dungeon?"

Our cavalier began attempting to break the lock with his sword and at the same time he found they were trying to knock the door down from within.

It was very strong and at first resisted all their efforts, but at length they were able to lift it off the hinges and throw it down.

The thirty soldiers who were inside precipitated themselves into the passage, and followed the unknown warrior who only stopped when he reached the quadrangle.

There the Lucchese soldiers of the guard had already confiscated his horse, and as soon as he issued first from the door threw themselves upon him. But they had scarcely raised their hands before the garrison soldiers had disarmed

them, and imprisoned them in their turn in a small room which had been used as a cell.

" Make haste, my sons ! " cried our cavalier, " take your arms and let us go ! every moment is precious."

Quickly said and quickly done ! in a moment the men had seized their arms which were in the guard-room on the first floor, and put themselves in order. Even Buondelmonte, grasping a broad-sword, stood in line with the others, thus placing himself under the command of the unknown knight who had not even raised his visor.

The Florentines, after fighting for half an hour, were now losing ground and many of their number were lying wounded by the enemy's weapons.

Usimbardi seemed to forget the weight of years and was here, there, and everywhere, holding off the enemy with his sword. At length, however, he was overpowered by four knights who attacked him simultaneously on all sides. The old man's arm, stiff with long action, refused to sustain any longer the weight of his sword. His eyes became dim with supreme fatigue, and he would have fallen pierced and trodden under the feet of his assailants — when the cry of " *Viva Firenze !* " resounded through the air, and at the same moment the soldiers of the garrison charged swiftly out of the fortress and in a flash the fate of battle was changed.

Meanwhile the cavalier who commanded the *sortie*, seeing Usimbardi in peril, rushed to his side and with a vigorous use of his sword drove off the Lucchese knights. Usimbardi still fighting gazed keenly at him, and recognized the un-

known knight of the blue bow who had thus once more saved him from death.

The Lucchesi, seeing that the result of the skirmish was changing, began to beat a retreat, though not without a parting thrust. One of the cavaliers who had fought hand to hand with Usimbardi, before leaving, raised his sword in the air and brought it down with a crash on the head of the knight of the blue bow, and then fled, wildly spurring his horse.

But the stroke took effect, the brave warrior swerved and fell in the dust, his helmet loosened in the fall, opened, and revealed the face of the young man.

Usimbardi was soon off his horse, and kneeling by the side of his preserver gazed at him, and exclaimed in astonishment :

“ Uberto del Manzecca — you ! ”

The young man raised both his arms, lifted his bleeding head and murmured :

“ You will forgive me ? ”

A warm embrace was the old captain’s reply as with tearful eyes he kneeled motionless beside the brave young knight.

A quarter of an hour later the victorious Florentines re-entered the Castle carrying their wounded soldiers, and the corpses of five or six brave fellows who had met death in the *mélée*.

## X.

Summer was at its height, and the suffocating heat was scarcely tempered by a light breeze which coming down from Monte Ceceri swayed the leaves of the trees that threw a welcome shade on the *plateau* of the Castle of Vineigliata.

One morning — a morning worthy of Paradise — Bianca was seated in her chamber, turning over the leaves of an old book of family records, and Berta, her faithful maiden, or rather friend, was at the window smiling at the soft breeze which ruffled her raven locks.

Her eyes were dwelling on the stupendous panorama before her. Florence was dimly shadowed out on the darker background of the hills of Marignolle, Bellosuardo, Arcetri and Montughi. The vast plain dotted with suburbs and villages, the Arno winding through it like a silver ribbon, the circlet of hills more or less near, and more or less elevated, made altogether the most lovely scene one could imagine. Add to these natural beauties the various aspects given by the battlemented towers and walls of the different castles which covered the Florentine hills. There were the towers of Soffiano, and Bellosuardo, the Torre de' Galli,<sup>1</sup> the church of Santa Margherita a Montici, which was at the time a fortress; and nearer, indeed nearly under her eye, shewed the Rocca Tedalda on Montalbano; Poggio Gherardo, and the Castle of Maiano.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Galileo's tower.

<sup>2</sup> Now belonging to J. Temple-Leader, Esq. See page 218.

It was indeed a most lovely view!

"Bianca, Bianca!" cried Berta interrupting her contemplations. "Look! do you not seem to see armed cavaliers coming up to Vincigliata from the direction of San Martino?" Bianca bounded from her seat, and running to the window, placed her hand like an arch over her eyes to shade the glare, and looked towards the plain which was spread like a flower-strewn carpet beneath the Castle.

"It does look so — yes," she said after a little time. "I see a gleam like armour, but the horses raise such a cloud of dust that one can distinguish nothing. We must wait till they came nearer."

Meanwhile the cavaliers continued to ascend the mountainous path leading to the Castle, the inhabitants of which were at length able to distinguish that there were three riders.

Two rode in front, side by side, and the third, keeping at a respectful distance behind, shewed that he was a squire. At a certain point the squire rode forward and approaching the Castle at a swift trot, stopped before the gate. A moment later the drawbridge creaking on its rusty hinges was lowered to admit the little band.

"My father!" exclaimed Bianca as soon as the cavaliers were near enough to be recognized, "but who is the other?"

"He wears his visor closed, and I do not know him," said Berta.

Bianca who had already thrown a white wimple over her head, tying it negligently under her chin, ran out of the

room to tell her mother, and aid her to go down the stairs, and they reached the quadrangle just as the servants were assisting the three horsemen to dismount.

Husband and wife, father and daughter were united in loving embraces, touching to see. They had not met for six months, and the poor women had lived in the greatest anxiety for the life of the old man, whom they knew to be in the perils of a destructive and forced war, in which the Florentines had not enough troops to oppose the Lucchesi.

When Bianca raised her eyes, she threw a questioning glance on the other warrior who stood apart with his helmet still closed. What strange whim caused him to conceal his face in that manner? And Bianca after inspecting him from head to foot turned to her father for an explanation, but just then the unknown lifted his arm and raising his visor, displayed his face, which was young and handsome, but pale from fatigue and pain.

"*Uberto!*" gasped Bianca under her breath.

"Yes, *Uberto*," said Messer Giovanni gaily, "embrace him,—it will do you both good. *Bianca*," he added to his daughter, "he truly is worthy of you. If it were not for his valour which has twice defended my life from the sword of the enemy, I should not have been able to embrace you now, and you would be orphaned and alone in the world."

"But after that, you in turn saved me from death by the unselfish care and nursing given me on a bed of pain, and so we are quits," returned the young man.

Bianca who had first become pallid from surprise, now flushed rosy red and threw her arms round the neck of her

beloved Uberto, whose image had, during these six months, lived always in her heart next to that of her father.

How often in those long winter days, in sleepless nights, in day-dreamy hours had she thought of him and of his promise to return when he was worthy of her! He had now maintained his word and had returned never again to leave her.

It may be imagined how this scene delighted Monna Tessa to whom her daughter had revealed the secret of her heart. She too embracing the gentle knight saluted him, and gained his assurance that he would never forsake Bianca.

The first emotions being passed, Uberto took the faded blue bow from his breast and presented it to Bianca saying:

" Do you remember the parchment which you sent one day to beg me to forget you? It was tied with a blue ribbon. I destroyed the letter, for it made me too despairing, but as I had no other memorial of you, I kept the ribbon and have worn it on my breast during all this long time. I restore it to you as a remembrance of how I gained your heart; and now as you are my own, I need no more outward favours to recall your image."

Bianca took the ribbon and pressed it to her lips, then put it in the bosom of her dress.

.....

The sun was just rising on a bright day near the end of summer, and it seemed that nature was adding festivity to an event which was to render two human beings happy. The bells of the church of Vincigliata rang gaily, inviting

the people of the village and neighbourhood to partake in a fête which was very unusual to them. The black and white standard of the Usimbardi waved merrily in the wind on the towers of the Castle ; and within it soldiers, servants, and friends were all engaged in preparing bouquets of flowers, adorning the rooms, and dressing for the fête.

The stout fortress of Castel del Poggio also presented an astonishing appearance adorned with flags and festoons, while from the great door a superb awning of bright colours was extended.

It was the day fixed for the marriage of Bianca and Uberto, a marriage which reconciled the feuds of two families, a thing the more easy as Simone del Manzecca, Uberto's brother, was no longer an obstacle to peace, having been exiled from his father's house, for his misdoings and disgraceful wildness.

At dawn of day Bianca was on the walls, gazing at her future home Castel del Poggio, and Uberto impatient to see his love again, mounted his faithful charger and with some slight excuse galloped towards Vincigliata.

Bianca who saw him coming down the steep road greeted him by waving the veil she held in her hand, and waited anxiously for his arrival. But suddenly the girl's face clouded over. When Uberto arrived within a few paces of the Castle, she saw three men dart out from behind some bushes and place themselves across the path intercepting his course. One of the three seized the reins of his horse, another caught the young man by the waist and threw him in the dust of the road, then the third who had held back,

came forward, took a weapon from his belt, and three times raising his arm plunged it into Uberto's heart.

Bianca was so paralyzed by the sight that she had not even the power to scream, but as soon as she realized what had happened she rushed down the steps leading to the walls, out of the Castle and ran to the spot. One glance was enough to show her that her betrothed was wounded and dangerously. The three men had fled precipitously towards the valley, but not so quickly but that the girl recognized one and called after him: "Woe to you, Simone del Manzecca, fratricide; — may God punish you!"

Meanwhile the villagers and soldiers attracted by Bianca's cries gathered around the wounded man, who with a white face and weakened by the loss of blood was already senseless.

The men carried him in their arms to Vincigliata and laid him on a bed where he received every possible care.

.....

An hour later Usimbardi, assisted by two servants, bore out from that chamber the form of Bianca, delirious and stained with her lover's blood.

The fratricidal hand of Simone del Manzecca had struck its mark — Uberto was no more!

## CONCLUSION.

In 1327 when the Florentine army under Charles de Valois was fighting against the Lucchesi beneath the walls of the strong Castle of Santa Maria in Monte, two cavaliers, one Lucchese and the other Florentine, detaching themselves a little from the midst of the *mélée*, were fighting with extraordinary asperity. Suddenly the Florentine, who seemed to gather strength in fighting, let fall such a blow on the head of his adversary that he broke the helmet which fell in two parts leaving the head bare. The adversary stood one moment immovable with his sword in the air, then he exclaimed: "Simone del Manzecca! assassin, fratricide, traitor to your country — I will punish you as you deserve."

And spurring his horse on him, he with another fierce blow, which Manzecca had no time to parry, cut right through his skull.

The brave knight was just rejoining his corps when with a terrible crash one of the battlements of the walls, which the besiegers had loosened, fell over and buried both horse and rider.

Two soldiers, who were near, approached the fallen man heedless of the peril and liberated him from the *débris*, but they only found a mutilated corpse.

"Poor Messer Giovanni Usimbardi," said one of the soldiers wiping away a tear, "he was a brave fellow!"

"Peace to his soul!" added the other, "he has ended his sufferings."

And Bianca?

Bianca had been unable to resist the tremendous misfortunes which had overwhelmed her, — she had lost her reason.

Many a night did she wander about the corridors of Vincigliata, dressed still in her bridal robes, and she passed hours and hours before the window where she had so often talked with Uberto. She looked like a ghost, with pale and drawn features and fixed gaze, she who had been always so lovely, bright and graceful.

One morning when her faithful Berta went down into the quadrangle she found her stiff and cold before the window which had been so dear to her.

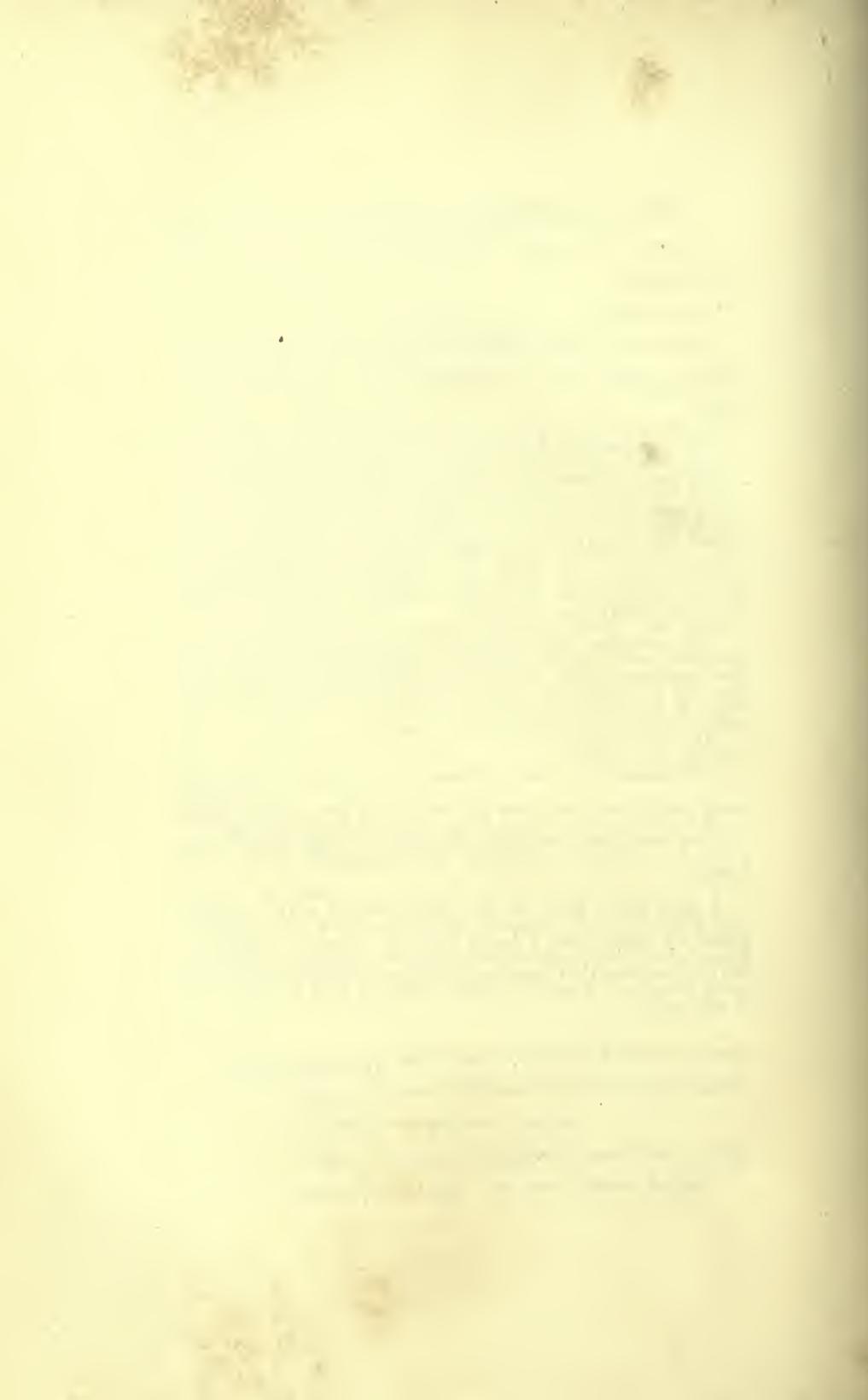
Alas, Bianca!

The peasants in the neighbourhood declared that nearly every night from that time the spectre of the maiden might be seen wandering beneath the subterranean arches of the Castle.

I have never been in the subterraneous parts of Vincigliata by night, but I know that the present inhabitants have never seen that shadow which has formed the substance of my story.

LEADER SCOTT

(*Translator*).



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## A VINCIGLIATA.

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Stretti, avviticchiati l'uno all'altra come l'ellera all'olmo, camminavano lungo il fianco del monte coperto d'abeti, e lassù, in quella campagna profumata dalla primavera, si sentivano tanto felici, perchè si amavano tanto. Di quando in quando lei volgeva, fermandosi, il viso verso l'uomo che da pochi giorni era diventato il compagno della sua vita e sorrideva come una beata del paradiso; poi lo guardava con i suoi bellissimi occhi bruni, e quello sguardo diceva: come sono contenta di essere tua moglie!

La coppia avventurata sentiva la vita al pari degli uccelli che cinguettavano sopra i rami degli alberi, e cantava l'inno eterno dell'amore, le cui strofe belle, dolci, soavi si rassomigliano tutte, perchè sono tanti baci.

Facevano i due sposi quella passeggiata piena d'incanti per visitare il castello di Vincigliata, un maniero che i milioni d'un nobile Inglese, sir G. Temple-Leader, hanno fatto risorgere dai ruderi nella sua primitiva forma, quale appariva nel XIV secolo, quando era abitato dagli Alessandri e Visdomini, nobili e potenti famiglie fiorentine. Ecco là il

bello e turrito edifizio. Le pietre grigiastre, le mura massicce coronate di merli, le piccole ogivali finestre con le grosse inferriate, spiccano meravigliosamente sopra uno di quei poggi che formano le deliziose pendici fiesolane.

Innanzi a quel castello — che pare fatto sorgere lì per lì dalla magica bacchetta d'una fata, come si legge in quei racconti fantastici, pascolo gradito della nostra prima giovinezza, tanto ci sorprende le sua perfetta conservazione — i nostri due felici si fermarono, suonarono una campana, una porticina ferrata cigolò sopra i cardini, ed entrarono. Allora incominciarono a percorrere quelle stanze tete, scarsamente illuminate per la luce colata che passava dalle finestre coi pezzetti di vetro colorato legati insieme da strisce di piombo, e ad ogni passo che facevano spariva dalla loro mente il 1882: ritornavano indietro sei secoli. Presi da allucinazione, a lei pareva di essere vestita di broccato e col corsetto tutto ricami e perle come la bella Agnoletta di messer Bettino Ricasoli, andata sposa nel 1381 a Nicholao Alessandri; a lui di aver elmo, celata e maglia, come Giovanni Aguto, che saccheggia e distrugge il castello nel 1364, o con il lucco di Alessandro Alessandri che lo riedifica nel 1368: fatti questi, ricordati da certi affreschi, imitazione di scuola giottesca, che si vedono sulle pareti del chiostro. Più d'una volta, l'uomo chiamò sua moglie *madonna*, ed ella il marito *messere*.

Questo ritorno al passato lo provano tutti i visitatori di quel castello, chè tutto, dalle mura di cinta alle serrature delle porte; dai mobili di legno di quercia intagliato ai letti di legno di cipresso coi pesanti baldacchini; dai vasellami di antica maiolica alle casse dorate e istoriate, nelle quali

le nobili donzelle fiorentine ponevano il loro corredo da sposa; dai cofanetti per le gioie ricchi d'intarsi ai calici di cristallo di rocca e ai candelabri di ferro battuto tutti arabeschi; dagli affreschi del 300 alle terre di Luca della Robbia, tutto ha l'impronta dei vecchi tempi. E per completare l'impressione storica che fa provare questo edifizio, non manca nemmeno una sala d'armi, dove in bella mostra, sono appese alle pareti picche, spade, misericordie, targhe, balestre, colubrine, corazze, armature complete, e alcuni strumenti di tortura. E tutto questo fu acquistato dal proprietario del castello, con quella intelligenza ed amore che alcuni stranieri hanno per le arti. Certo in quelle mura c'è un vero tesoro archeologico, dove lo studioso, l'artista e il poeta troveranno sempre da pensare e ispirazioni a fare.

La nostra coppia era arrivata in una sala con la vòlta seminata di gigli d'oro. Nelle pareti spicavano gli stemmi gentilizi degli antichi signori del castello sopra un parato formato d'animali graziosamente disposti.

La donna, sorridendo, andò a sedersi in un bel seggiolone coperto di cuoio con grosse borchie dorate, e rivolta a suo marito con sguardo civettuolo, le disse:

" Io sono Diana d'Alteno, voi il conte di Monsoprano. E ora, attenti all'enigma, chè se l'indovinerete avrete la mia mano, le mie terre, i miei vassalli, le mie castella."

Ed alzatasi, con posa declamatoria, cominciò:

Mio bel cavaliero, sai dirmi qual sia,  
Quel moto convulso che dura un istante,  
Che l'anima ruba e il cor porta via?  
Mio bel cavaliero, sai dirmi qual sia?

E lui pensò, ma non trovò sul momento la spiegazione di questo facilissimo indovinello. E lei sorrideva sempre, e gioiva dell'imbarazzo in cui aveva posto il marito, che, col gomito appoggiato alla finestra, pensava all'enigma, mentre i suoi occhi erravano sulla sottoposta Firenze.

La donna si avvicinò, gli posò un braccio sulla spalla e disse:

"Guarda; come è bella Santa Maria del Fiore! anche il sole innamorato la *bacia!*" e calcò sopra quest'ultima parola.

"Ah!" egli esclamò, "ho vinto!"

E posò le sue labbra sopra i neri capelli della sua sposa, che in quel momento accarezzava un venticello leggero come un sospiro.

(G. BARGILLI, in the *Giornale pei Viaggiatori*,  
May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1882.)

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## LE CHÂTEAU DE VINCIGLIATA.

Un château de fées avec donjon, tourelles et créneaux, construit de toutes pièces, dominant la plaine et les collines, placé en face d'un immense horizon, un château des légendes, pareil à ceux qui ornent le cours du Rhin, ou les *highlands* de l'Écosse, ou plutôt pareil à ces châteaux d'architecture arabe que les voyageurs anglais nous décrivent dans les gorges du Thibet, où se trouve un tel château? — Dans les environs de Florence, à trois quarts d'heure de la ville. Son donjon, ses créneaux, ses tourelles, son mur d'enceinte monumental, sans la moindre brèche, et fait de ces belles pierres non polies qui forment les solides assises des vieux palais florentins, l'enceinte du Bargello par exemple, apparaissent au loin sur les hauteurs, dans ce pli des montagnes qui forme l'amphithéâtre depuis Fiesole jusqu'à Pontassieve.

C'est le nouveau château de Vincigliata, reconstruit depuis dix ans, sur les ruines de l'ancien, par M. John Temple-Leader, gentilhomme anglais, qui a consacré à cette œuvre considérable une sollicitude d'amateur, d'antiquaire très éclairé. Le château de Vincigliata est situé sur le territoire de Majano,

immédiatement au-dessous de Castel di Poggio, autre donjon posé sur la crête de la montagne, vers le nord-est. On s'y rend par San Gervasio, la Fonte all'Erta et une belle route à lacet qui gravit la hauteur à travers un bois de conifères, de cyprès et pins plantés par M. Temple lui-même.

On se trouve en présence d'une enceinte carrée et crénelée dans laquelle s'ouvrent deux portes: l'une regarde l'ouest, vers le mont Ceceri; l'autre le nord, vers Castel di Poggio et le très petit bourg ou hameau de Vincigliata, c'est la principale. De ce côté, le rempart est précédé d'un fossé, l'entrée, d'un pont en construction. La porte s'ouvre dans une tourelle avec meurtrières et guérites, voûte, pieds-droits et sarrasines. On est dans une vaste cour carrée, on voit le rempart à son revers; un chemin circule derrière les créneaux, chemin en pierres de taille placées sur la maçonnerie, créneaux à sarrasine surplombant la muraille.

Aux deux tiers de l'aire de la cour, vers le sud, s'élève le donjon, la partie habitable, le château proprement dit. Son entrée se rencontre à peu près en face de la porte occidentale. Cette porte n'est point ouverte encore; on voit auprès, à gauche, une sorte de porche en maçonnerie, soutenu par des piliers octogones, à chapiteaux capricieux; sous le porche sont ménagées des banquettes pour accueillir les serviteurs, les gens qui ne seraient point admis immédiatement dans le château.

On gravit un escalier; une lourde porte garnie de fer, avec appareil de fermeture très ouvragé, donne accès dans la cour noble: c'est une seconde apparition; on croirait arriver chez un prince des contes de fées. À droite, *loggia*

florentine soutenue par des pilastres à chapiteaux-bizarres, banquettes de noyer sculpté; puits à l'angle vis-à-vis la porte, la poulie est soutenue par une chimère en pierre grise, qui tient l'anneau de fer dans sa gueule béante, la margelle est sculptée. Dans le mur à pierres de taille grossièrement écarries, avec les arêtes fortement accusées, sont incrustées des armoiries, celles du maître actuel: d'argent à trois coquilles de même, plaquées sur rouelle de sinople, à la fasce aussi de sinople chargée de deux hures de sanglier et d'un muffle de lion d'or, celui-ci dans le milieu; support et cimier — *Crest* — un lion chapé d'un heaume empanaché, tenant dans la senestre un laurier, dans la dextre un ciste avec la devise *me duce*; — les armes des propriétaires anciens, le coq de la famille Galli, de Rovezzano, le mouton à double tête des Alessandri; les armes des divers quartiers de Florence, la fleur de lys et la croix de gueules, l'aigle et le dragon du parti guelfe, le mot *libertas* en bande de la république.

Plus haut, on lit l'anathème célèbre du pape Grégoire XI:  
*In judicio non resurgat — damnatus male pereat — cum Juda iniquo partem habeat — si quis hunc locum quovis modo — sive ingenio violare presumpserit.*

L'habitation, ce qu'on nomme le gros œuvre, s'élève à gauche de la cour d'honneur. On y arrive par un escalier à trois paliers; les fenêtres et plusieurs portes de l'appartement sont masquées par un balcon à parapet plein, suspendu sur les deux côtés. Là se voient une salle d'armes pareille à un musée, des cabinets tendus de cuir de Cordoue, des chambres pavoisées de damas; les fenêtres sont garnies de rondelles de verre à nombril, comme celles du Bargello.

Un autre bâtiment en contre-bas est actuellement en construction; là, seront des chambres et des salles pour les hôtes et les domestiques, peut-être des écuries. L'escalier en pierre de taille, ménagé dans une tour carrée, avec l'arête extérieure en zig-zag, comme des carreaux de foudre, descend dans des salles voûtées. On se trouve à la hauteur d'un cloître situé dans l'angle de l'enceinte, et dont le pavé est au niveau du rempart et du sol extérieur.

Il ne faut pas qu'on s'imagine que le château de Vincigliata est une de ces œuvres capricieuses où la solidité est sacrifiée à l'apparence. Au contraire, l'aspect noble et artistique résulte de la masse, du choix des matériaux, de la solidité de la construction, du bon goût et de la rigueur architectonique de la mise en œuvre. Ce caprice de grand seigneur n'est rien moins qu'un monument dans la campagne, sur les hauteurs, dans la localité qui lui convient précisément, au milieu d'un paysage un peu solitaire et en vue d'une plaine magnifique et riante, comme celle de l'Arno, depuis Compiobbi jusqu'à Signa.

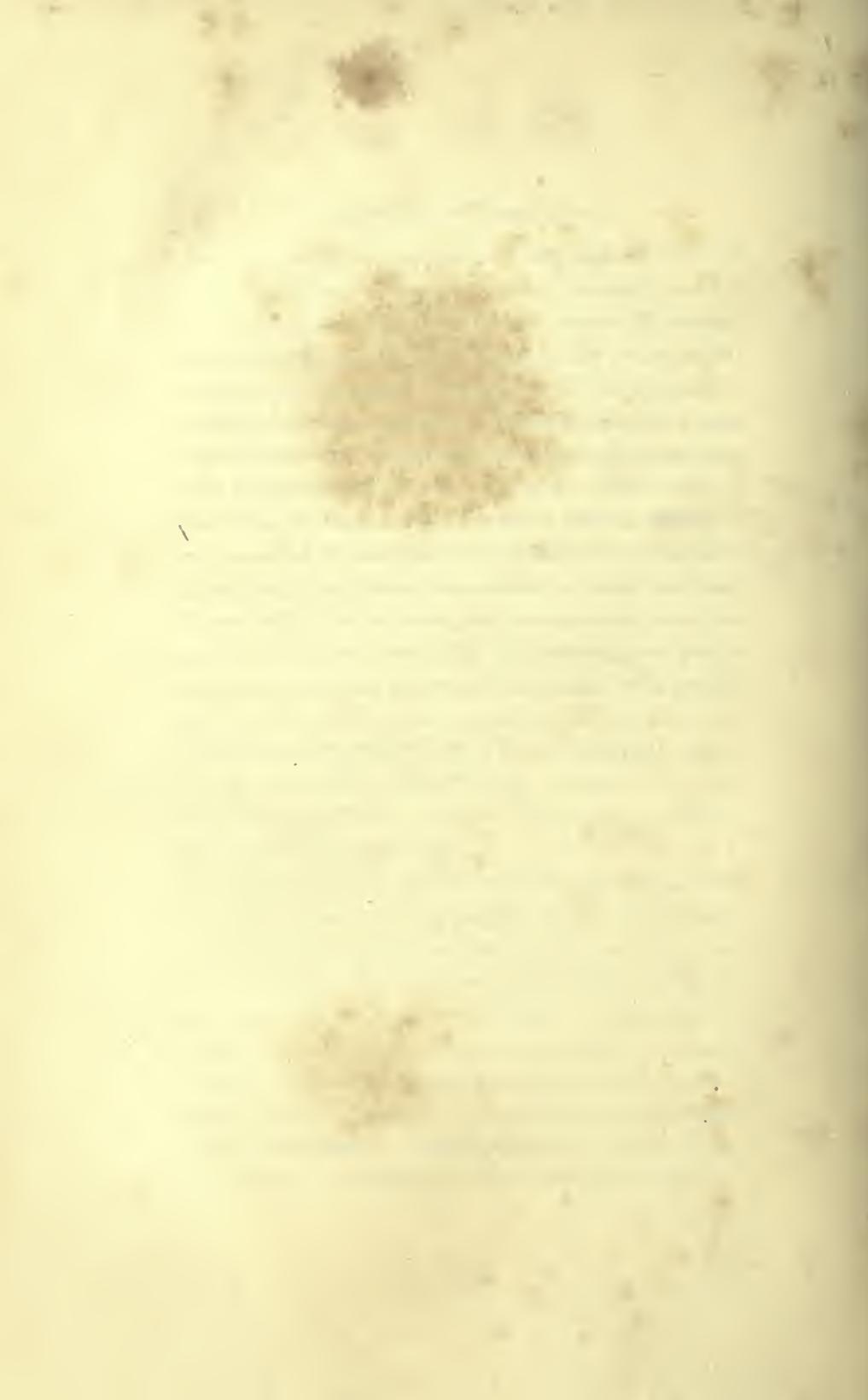
La reconstruction du château est due à un architecte de talent, mort récemment, M. Giuseppe Fancelli. Les détails de sculpture sont exécutés, au jour le jour, par un de ces tailleurs de pierre de la contrée, David Giustini, de Settignano, qui rivalisent avec les sculpteurs, et continuent la tradition des grands artistes sortis des carrières séculaires du Monte Ceceri. C'est de là, en effet, que sont venus à Florence et dans le monde de l'art sérieux, de l'art épique Giuliano et Benedetto da Majano, Desiderio da Settignano, celui-là même, dont Cicognara a écrit « que par lui on peut

dire que l'art du ciseau a touché à sa perfection. » Personne n'ignore, d'ailleurs, que c'est à Majano et à Settignano que le grand Michel-Ange choisissait les maîtres qu'il envoyait à Serravezza et à Carrare administrer ses carrières de marbre.

Tel qu'il est, le château de Vincigliata est tout-à-fait digne de la contrée et des traditions artistiques des alentours. Sa visite est une des plus jolies excursions des environs de Florence. À le voir, sur la montagne un peu pelée, se détacher sur les verdures pâles, au bout de son chemin en zig-zag, dans l'atmosphère lumineuse et dorée de l'automne, on dirait un de ces châteaux fantastiques que les maîtres de la fresque et de la peinture à la détrempe, les maîtres mystiques du XIV<sup>me</sup> siècle, ont introduits dans leurs tableaux pour représenter la cité du paradis.

(CHARLES ESCALLE, in the Florentine newspaper *L'Italie*,  
September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1868.)

THE END.





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